SPEKE SERMONS

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PREACHED AT

All Saints' Church, Speke, Liverpool

BY

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The Beginning of Lent.

"Now if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His."
ROMANS viii. 9.

To be Christ's, and to be none of His, are words that have a very alarming sound for men who profess themselves, and wish to be Christians. They seem to suggest something deeper than what we have in general been in the habit of considering as implied by the name of Christian.

To be Christ's, or, as we should commonly say, to be a Christian, is to have been baptized, to frequent a Christian place of worship, to share in the blessings and privileges, whatever they are, that Christ came on earth to procure and bestow: in return we bow our heads before Him, feel that all other religions, much as we may wish to make allowances for those who in blindness or wilfulness profess them, are mistakes. But when we read that those who have not the spirit of Christ are none of His, we immediately feel that something more is implied than what we have been in the habit of allowing.

The phrase suggests the idea of our own spirit

being the sole mainspring of our actions; and, as the spirit of man is the instigator, the ruling principle, the sole motive of all that man thinks, says, or does, so for man to have the spirit of Christ is to intimate that Christ's spirit takes possession of all man's nature, and becomes, in lieu of his own spirit, the sole instigator, the sole motive power, the whole, of his being.

A man, therefore, whatever he may call himself at any moment of his life, can only truly call himself a Christian, truly Christ's, when the Spirit of Christ is his ruling principle; that is (to judge a tree by its fruits) when his life is a copy (poor, faint, bad imitation possibly, but certainly an honest copy) of the life of Christ. Do we hesitate here and say, Christ's life was passed eighteen hundred years ago, under forms and conditions of life impossible for us at the present day? He was born a Jew, bred a Galilean. He was a poor wanderer, with no home, no family, no means of livelihood. He was a wise teacher, with mind intent upon the lessons of nature, the difficulties of life. How can our lives be at all made to resemble His? But the spirit of His life! Cannot selfishness and self-indulgence be the same, wherever hidden? And love, sympathy, self-sacrifice, and self-devotion, surely need no one certain clime or century wherein to show themselves. The surroundings of life are in all cases unimportant, the spirit and principle of the life alone *of* consequence.

Have we then, in our way and in our position, that spirit of Christ's? If we have it not, the text says, we are none of His. Suppose we have it not—suppose we have it mixed up with some unworthy spirit, so that we act capriciously, uncertainly, weakly;—would it not be worth our while to examine ourselves to see whether we fail, and if we do, how we fail?

Our Church, taking upon herself to be our guide in every domain of our spiritual progress, fearing, too, lest we should omit anything that may conduce to our spiritual benefit, fixes on a time when she insists upon our examining ourselves; and, taking it also for granted that the examination will not be satisfactory, marks out a season, when she expects that we shall, upon examination had, deplore the extent of our shortcomings, take upon ourselves the office of avengers of our sins, in order to show our detestation of that self-indulgent spirit we have been giving way to, and to propitiate the deserved anger of the Almighty.

A few days are not enough; our shortcomings need being dwelt upon. It is necessary to prove the sincerity of our sorrow and repentance. A short time of self-denial, it was thought, could hardly make up for a long course of self-indulgence. What had been continued for some longer time than a few days might throw a colour over the future, and make us less self-indulgent afterwards. This season is Lent; and, as

our blessed Lord spent, for our sakes, forty days fasting in a gloomy wilderness in constant struggling with Satan, it was thought we might well be content to pass forty days in gloom and solitude, pondering over our sins, humble, repentant, penitent.

Fasting and Penance were in old times the universal watchwords of this season. We of the present day are so afraid of seeing the reality swallowed up by the sign, that we prefer sadness and seriousness of heart to Fasting, and remorse of conscience to Penance. But the outward signs were not without a very real meaning. To show how deeply the idea was ingrained in men's minds that the lower parts of our nature could only be kept in order and subdued, by actual bodily mortifications, such as are emblematised by the curb and the lash, we may instance that celebrated allegory of the ancients, in which they compared the nature of man to a winged pair of horses driven by a charioteer. One of these horses was finely bred, noble, generous, docile, obedient, full of all good instincts and impulses; the other, coarse, thick-necked, brutal, ill-tempered, full of the most depraved impulses, was always thwarting the exertions of the other, and, in spite of all the care and management of the charioteer, at times bearing all down from the resplendent heights of ether to regions of mist and gloom and darkness. All the charioteer's energies had to be directed to managing the brutal horse. It was only by curb and

lash that it could be prevented ruining the whole. And even when its headlong course was stopped, it was thought necessary that its spirit and temper should be mortified. It is described as being brought to a standstill, pulled down upon its haunches, and therein, wherein it had offended, tamed and mastered. The allegory was thought to typify exactly human nature. Before the course of our car of life could be successfully guided, the lower part of our nature had not only to be restrained and directed, but mortified, broken in, and tamed. Had our self-will been leading us astray, that self-will had now to be beaten down to earth and crushed. Had our carnal nature been revelling wildly, thereby debasing us, it ought now to be subdued and kept under. Wherein we had offended, in that ought we now to mortify ourselves.

It is certainly human nature to think so. It is only in accordance with a great deal of St. Paul's own acting and teaching to practise and recommend the keeping one's body in subjection, and mortifying and subduing the flesh to the spirit. It is perhaps but a carrying out into literal fulfilment of our blessed Lord's own maxim: "If thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off and cast them from thee." All that we are afraid of is, lest the maxim should be obeyed in the letter, and the obedience of the letter be made to do service for that of the heart and spirit.

As, therefore, we are beginning Lent—the season

of self-examination—the season when our Church insists that we should review the state of our life, the tenor of our conduct, and correct and amend in ourselves by God's grace whatsoever doth offend the eyes of our Heavenly Father, taming and subduing by curb and lash those parts of our nature which prevent the ascent of our winged soul to the ethereal heights of heaven; what shall be the style of our self-examination? Shall we ask, Wherein am I offending? What has been my stumbling-block? And can I now, during Lent, take myself to task on that or these points, and during the whole of these six weeks mortify and do violence to these inclinations, in order that they, like brute beasts that have been chastised and cowed, may for a time allow the spiritual part of my nature free course for development? Wise people have always doubted the efficacy of such treatment—at present more than ever. Dissatisfaction, it is felt, ought to be removed rather than kept in subjection and repressed by fear. The curb, the lash, fasting and penance, may show our anger and vexation, but surely they are not powers to control the mind and spirit of man. We doubt the efficacy of savage treatment, even with savage natures. Where there is even a latent spark of moral feeling, we fly willingly to moral force and influence; and with the spirit of man what can do the work required like spiritual influences? The proper master, the proper

power, capable of ruling the spirit of man is the spirit of Christ.

Shall we then, at the beginning of Lent, begin by deploring the sway of our carnal appetites and affections, the power of our wilful tempers, our indolence, our indifference, the coldness of our hearts, the lukewarmness of our devotion, our selfishness, our worldliness, our neglect of that splendid law of charity? We may well do so, but what then? That would be but deploring the foulness of the waters, when the fountain-head springs forth polluted, miles distant, among the rocks of the far-off mountains. Let us rather deplore that in the secret springs of our hearts the spirit of Christ has not been working. There lies the fountain-head; and it, if purified by the spirit of Christ, will, when developed into a full stream flowing along past the labours and dwellings of man, run on amid the lowland plains, purifying and refreshing all.

We have not been aware of the power of this spirit of Christ. We have perhaps heard of it, but have not believed in it.

Let this, then, be what we deplore at this season. We have not believed in this power of the spirit of Christ. This want of belief may be the root of all our mistakes. We may have been grieved and angry with ourselves; we have perhaps used, metaphorically speaking, the lash and curb with ourselves; we have perhaps fasted and humbled ourselves, going

softly in the bitterness of our souls, thinking that it was our weakness, our indolence, that were the causes why our human nature was refusing to become that divine nature we knew it should become. All that has been useless. A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit; a fountain of bitter waters cannot send forth fresh. No care, no discipline, no curbing, no spurring on, no penance, no worldly rules of refinement, no philosophy, no system of religion, ever can wash an Ethiopian's skin, or change a leopard's spots. Before that can be done, a man must be born again in Christ; his whole nature must be changed; or, if these figures of speech about being born again, or human nature being changed, are not exactly what we can understand, let us say—a man must give himself up wholly into Christ's hands, receive His principles into his heart, determine to guide his life entirely after Christ's spirit and example—I say determine, for the grace is there at all times ready to help and assist us—and he will have let another and a purifying stream into the fountain of his heart; he will have cut off the branches of the old tree near the stock, and there have engrafted a new, luxuriant shoot, which will grow up on all sides, bearing fruit for the joy and delight of men.

Remember, if self-sacrifice was the essence, the watchword of our blessed Lord's life, we have none of His spirit, if self-indulgence is even the weakness

of ours. Is, then, this spirit of Christ's to be had for the asking? It is certainly to be had for the wishing, the earnestly desiring. Will there be difficulties? This world is bound up in difficulties. Satan has not yet been cast chained into the bottomless pit. We shall be tempted, during the whole of our mortal life, by what may be called his arts,—by selfishness in all its forms, by lust, passion, appetite, worldliness, indolence, vanity; the serpent is destined to continue until the end foe to the seed of the woman—foe to those who are Christ's; but "stronger is He that is for us than he that is against us;" and the head of the serpent will at last be crushed by the heel of the Son of man.

There at the last will end our difficulties; but in this world self-reproach, self-mortification, Lenten obligations, abide. In that case there is another Lent, lasting longer than six passing weeks, lasting the whole of our mortal life; for the disciple cannot be above his Master; and our Lord's whole life was a continual Lent, full of earnestness, anxiety, self-sacrifice, struggling with evil in all its forms, quite as really and quite as truly as those forty days of His in the wilderness were, of which our Church's Lent is but a humble copy. If He, therefore, was content to make His whole life a Lent, ought we not to be so also? If we have the spirit of Christ, we shall think nothing difficult or wearisome that He endured; nor

shall we look for any reward apart from the doing and the being like Him. To have His spirit, to follow a little in His footsteps, will be for us the height of happiness—a pure, serene, unclouded, perfect happiness; the only misery or discomfort being the being away from Him—having not His spirit.

Is Lent, then, a time of gloom? Does sorrow for sin—does humiliation of heart—does self-denial give us sad and mournful thoughts? They are Lenten thoughts, becoming us, it is said, six whole weeks. That is, however, only a partial account of them. They become us during the whole of our lives; we may glory in them; they describe the style of the whole of our Lord's own life: earnestness, anxiety, sorrow for sin—in others. He endured their realities, with a heart at the same time abounding in active, cheerful, love and sympathy. When, therefore, it is suggested to us that our lives must be a sort of continual Lent—lives of seriousness, earnestness, humbleness of mind, sorrow for sin, and contrition of heart—do such words trouble us? No; nor their realities. The most alarming words that could be uttered to us—words that would fill us with the greatest concern lest their reality should be applicable to us—are, "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His." My brethren, what, if we have not that spirit? Then all our professed Christianity is of no use to us. We are none of Christ's; we are not Christians.

First Sunday in Lent.

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the Devil."—MATTHEW iv. 1.

To be tempted of the Devil are words which, though they have a very solemn sound, yet give but few of us any very clear and definite idea.

The word temptation itself, though it may often rise to our lips, may yet seldom be used by us, as conveying a meaning, involving with it a matter of life and death.

We all know that it is impossible to go onward many steps in life without meeting with difficulties; which difficulties, though we know that they are of the nature of a trial or temptation, are lightly passed over, not reckoned of much importance.

If we were to become convinced that everything, that was of the nature of a trial or temptation, if indulged in and given way to, became a sin, and were asked to consider what the sins were, that were most likely to beset us day by day, we should enumerate, first of all, perhaps, sins of irritability and temper, or pride and covetousness, or hatred, envy, and malice, or

sloth and idleness; or we might, some of us, go so far as to sins of lust, drunkenness, or gluttony; and there would be but few of us, perhaps, who would not be assailed by trials and temptations arising from sins of some such nature as these; but we should, in no case, look at the possibility of falling under any of them, as a matter of life and death. We should not think ourselves very violently attacked, if we were assailed by these only; or, perhaps, some of us would think some of them very serious; but it would have to be something very extraordinary, something removed from what we have to encounter daily, before we should be very much alarmed about our safety.

Now the least reflection is enough to show us that, inasmuch as all yielding to temptation is a falling into sin, any one of these common ordinary trials is a very serious matter,—a falling before any one may be enough to ruin our eternity; nay, to be able to pass successfully through some common ordinary trial, such as we feel is constantly besetting our daily path, may be the lesson of a life-time, and may need, in addition to God's grace, all our own care and striving.

We shall see this more clearly by considering what idea people attach to Lent. Many persons are accustomed to look upon it somewhat in this way:

We are all soldiers, but at present we are not in a state of war. Since, however, it is wise to practise

in time of peace what we should have to do, if we found the enemy in the field encamped against us, we go into camp, live as if in presence of the enemy, go through our evolutions and exercises, and by practice, drill, and discipline, prepare ourselves for what we should have to go through, if we really had an enemy in the field to encounter; and then, when the time is over, we go back to our homes and our daily life, thinking that, if war had to be declared and danger came, we should be more likely to fight successfully and overcome the enemy, now that we had been disciplining ourselves, than if we had not been during peace, under arms, at drill, and under discipline. In Lent, therefore, we do what we should always do, if we thought sin very powerful and very near us.

In Lent we do no more than what we should at all times do, if we continually felt ourselves sorely tempted and in danger of falling seriously: we should, I am sure, in that case come before God with all our hearts, casting aside all that seemed to draw away our thoughts from the seriousness of our position, and, in doubt of our own strength, pray to God with humble and contrite hearts that He would not leave us without His grace, but, in proportion to the magnitude of the danger, give us an extra supply of it, to enable us to resist and overcome what seemed to us so menacing.

We live, therefore, in Lent, as we should do, in case we saw ourselves brought face to face with

some very dangerous temptation, and obliged to do battle for the very life of our souls.

I wonder, is this the way any of *us* look at Lent? Do we look upon it as merely a time of discipline, unconscious of any real warfare? Our acknowledged trials lie in the way of temper, malice, hatred, and revenge; perhaps we are tempted by greed, covetousness, ambition; or sloth and idleness trouble us; or it may be that lust, gluttony, and drunkenness dig pitfalls in the way of some of us. Do we really feel ourselves face to face with any of these, any one of which is quite able to destroy our souls, and equal to fighting a battle of life and death with us? Or do we say to ourselves: No, Lent to me is a season of discipline and exercise only; at present I have no enemy, no serious temptations to fight against; I am merely practising myself? If any of us think in that way, we are quite wrong. These common ordinary sins are dangerous, and should be guarded against as watchfully, as if we thought them the most terrible in the world. If we once looked at all sin as from the Devil and belonging to him, we should be willing to acknowledge how heinous and terrible it was.

This first Sunday in Lent suggests such a way of looking at sin.

Our first parents were created, and placed in the garden of Eden, a very beautiful Paradise, with every-

thing around them, that heart could desire; but they are created by God with an object,—to serve their Maker, we will say, and to be at the head of a creation, which has been pronounced to be very good. If they are unworthy to stand on that exalted pedestal, where God has placed them, let them come down from it; there can be no virtue without intrinsic worth.

Meantime Satan, the Prince of evil, the Enemy of all good, the Slanderer and Accuser, dwells in the region of night and of darkness, a fallen Angel, banished from the presence of the Almighty. He comes to our first parents, and, like the enemy's general attacking young soldiers that have just donned their armour, challenges them to prove their virtue. The contest takes place, and they fall, unworthy to hold the high position, in which their Creator had placed them. The world is now Satan's. This state of things continues for some time, and at last, in God's good time, another being comes into the world—the Eternal Son of God—to rescue mankind from their subjugation to the Evil One, and to restore them to the dominion of the Almighty. This Eternal Son of God is born into this world of ours, as one of ourselves, in our flesh; He lives, for some years of childhood and manhood, unknown, and then comes forth and is baptized of John in Jordan, and enters upon His office of Saviour and Redeemer. He is the Champion to restore the lost world. Is He equal to

His position? If not, let Him retire; but, if He means to be man's Champion and Defender, He must show Himself able to withstand all that the Prince of the world, the Devil, can bring against Him.

In imagination we can picture the time and place for the combat arranged. On one side is our Saviour, the Representative of the human race; on the other is Satan, armed with all the arts and devices with which he has already enthralled the world.

Then was Jesus, after His baptism, led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the Devil.

On that contest depends the welfare of the whole human race. He is actually our Champion. *We* were tried and found too weak to resist the Devil. Now the Son of God comes, in shape and fashion as a man, to undertake the contest for man; and if He now conquer, man will henceforth, in the strength of the Son of God, be able to withstand Satan and overcome him.

So wonderful is all this, that, of course, there have been innumerable attempts at interpreting it according to our finite comprehension. The simplest and easiest way, however, is to take the words of the Bible as they stand, and consider that here we have a real account; it is no picture, no allegory, but a description of a real contest waged between our Saviour, a living being, and the Prince of the power of the air, a living being also, Satan, the Devil. If we

allegorise it, and say that the contest was confined to our Saviour's own heart, as He wandered alone and in solitude, and that the reality of it lay in the debate He had with Himself, whether He should use His almighty power to save Himself from starvation, and clothe Himself with riches; whether He should make people obey Him at once by a miraculous use of divine power; and whether He should mount on to the clouds of heaven, and draw men after Him by ways of peace and ease, so that there should be no necessity for their hurting their feet against a stone,—we should deprive it of all the power it possesses, as a means of exciting our adoration and strengthening our will.

It is a great deal for us in life to be convinced that our blessed Lord really went into a lonely and desolate wilderness, and there met the Devil face to face, and beat him; and that, in that contest, He was fighting for us and for our salvation. That idea of reality is worth more than all allegorical explanations. It is, moreover, the plain account of Scripture; and we can understand it. We say to ourselves that it was natural for our Lord, if He had come into the world to put down evil, to have to meet the Devil face to face at the very outset of His career. We know that He did so meet him, and at that meeting conquered; and we thank God that such has been the result. But our hearts sympathise with all the difficulties He had to encounter—nay, when we think of all that

dreadful battle in the dark and lonely wilderness, we find words too inadequate to express our gratitude; we want to fall down and worship.

But what an idea does that give us of sin and evil! They are no more abstract names, bare ideas; they are arts, devices, and tools of the Devil. The least of them is as much his work, the work of him whom our Saviour resisted in the wilderness, as the greatest. It is hardly a question of magnitude; but they are all hateful; the works of that great adversary the Devil. While any sin is standing in our way, it cannot be said that we are at peace. If, during this Lent, we know that there is one sin tempting us, though it should be what the world calls a little, slight, unimportant sin, it cannot be said that we are at peace, or that our prayers and self-denial, earnestness and humiliation, are mere discipline—exercises solely to prepare ourselves for a time of war. The enemy is actually before us, and the battle is in earnest.

Some might, in that way, feel inclined to say, then our whole lives ought to be a continual Lent; and no doubt they ought to be so. When our Saviour's forty days and nights of the wilderness were over, we read, the Devil left Him, but only for a season. No man has to fight one pitched battle, and no more. The Devil, foiled for the time, comes back to the attack; and, if he is no match for open

fight, waylays our solitude, suggests easy paths to us, a sparing of ourselves, and a giving up one sin for another.

Our blessed Lord was for ever fighting Satan; in no one circumstance did He remit His watchfulness, and think little of Satan's attacks and temptations. When His most honoured and trusted disciple merely suggested that our Lord was too severe with Himself, He was not to be deceived from whom the suggestion came; it came from him who had been vanquished in the wilderness; and our Lord replied to His warmest friend's best suggestion, meant in all love and affection, with "Get thee behind Me, Satan."

So, too, if we feel inclined to grumble that watching and praying, and self-denial and humiliation, will, in that light, have to be the work, not of Lent only, but also of our lives, let us be assured that it will not be in Lent only, that we shall be attacked by Satan. We are stationed in the enemy's country, and, if we think that all we need do is discipline ourselves for some imaginary future conflict, we are under a wrong impression about the reality of temptation, and are not aware that every sin is one of the arts and machinations of the Devil. No, the discipline, we shall have to perfect ourselves in, will be acquired in this world, not by playing, acting, and preparing for war, but by actual hard and earnest warfare.

Such will life be found to be by all; for, if all sin is of the Devil, then no trial or temptation is unimportant; and if we are in the midst of temptations, trials—difficulties, if so we choose to call them, —then life is no sea-girt island, so secure, prosperous, and well-ordered in itself, that the only danger, that can possibly happen to it, will be from the accidental success of some unexpected hostile invader; but it is a land, where never-ending civil war rages, and individual security can only be attained by individual courage and watchfulness.

We need not disguise things. We are campaigning in a land that is not ours; but, if we have been brave and faithful soldiers, our victorious General, when the time of our service shall have expired, will appoint us in another land, far from the sound of the war in this, possessions, where, hanging up our arms above our hearths, we can settle down in peace and comfort, thankful that we have had grace and strength to fight such a good fight here, and thinking little of the hardships we have had to endure, in enjoyment of a rest, which will be serene, unclouded, and everlasting.

Second Sunday in Lent.

"Without were fightings, within were fears."—2 Cor. vii. 5.

I am afraid that, if we were allowed to choose what kind of life we should prefer to live, very few of us before experience would make a wise choice. Blessings and misfortunes are seldom in the end what they appeared to be going to be in the beginning: and, unfortunately, we are content to chance the future in the present; and, if a thing looks well now, choose it in preference to what would be the wise choice, if we knew and could coolly estimate all.

Travellers have depicted to us, in a far-off southern ocean, an island where the climate is delicious, the soil fertile beyond conception, the bread-fruit hanging close by over head, the soft winds taking away all necessity for house and clothing;—while here is our own country, where, for six months in the year, without shelter and good garments we should perish; where, without work and skill, and forethought and prudence, it would be impossible to find food for a day for our vast population; which country should we choose? In that island the inhabitants are child-

ren in intellect, without industry, skill, energy, and strength of character; not much more thoughtful or inventive, it is said, than the fowls of the air, or the fishes of the sea.[1] Every wise man, knowing the results of being born and living on such an island, would say, My own country for me, with all its difficulties, its hard work, and necessity for struggling; for such difficulties, provided I can overcome them, do me good; and, even if I can not overcome them, better is death in the midst of action, than living on a life, in no respects more satisfactory than death itself. Indeed, so little do right-minded people shrink from difficulties, that it would be universally thought disgraceful, if riches and an exalted position in life were only made use of, for the purpose of bodily ease and comfortable living. A man, who is at all worthy of the name of man, delights in a life of labour, and rejoices in contributing to the victory, the race of man in this climate of ours gains over hard and unfriendly nature. Of course we do not love the thorns and thistles that the earth so naturally bears, nor do we welcome the cold blasts and hurricanes of winter; but, since we have to meet them on every side, and are at the same time approving of things that are more excellent, we justly pride ourselves in seeing what good we can get out of things inherently evil, and think that our best virtue consists in overcoming them.

[1] Thorndale.

Not otherwise is it with the difficulties that beset our souls. There is no denying that there is an immense amount of evil in the world; for the Devil, like a roaring lion, is ever walking about seeking whom he may devour. We have not the choice put before us, *whether* we prefer heaven, where there is no evil, to earth, where it is so rampant; but we do have the choice given us, *how* we will act in presence of this evil. We may partly retire from the conflict, betaking ourselves to some far-off distant island, as it were; where, with moral sense dulled by inactivity, or charmed to rest by the siren voices of worldly gain and pleasure, we may live like children, wholly taken up with their sleep or play, and utterly unacquainted with the difficulties that beset the paths of grown-up men and women.

But that is not what any wise man would choose. Sin is in the world, and shutting ourselves up in a monastery or convent is not the way to master and overpower it. Sin is in the world; and calling it by some specious name, such as a desire for self-preservation, under conditions rendered impossible or difficult owing to our present state of civilisation, will not remove it.

If a pestilence were raging in our midst, no man would think it the wise course, either to ignore it and call it by some other name, or for each man who could do so, to shut himself in his own house, cutting

himself off as far as possible from the world around, and letting the malady rage and revel, where and how it pleased unrestrained. Everybody who had any thought and feeling would be glad to know what the true nature of the pestilence was, and, in hatred of its deadly nature, and in sympathy with the community, rush in, and determine, in spite of all personal risk and danger, to use every exertion to confine it within the narrowest possible bounds, if it was found impracticable to stamp it out altogether. And although we might feel a sort of pride in having been engaged in such a conflict, and think that we were better men and women for having had to struggle against it so energetically, in order to gain the mastery over it, yet we should not forget that the pestilence was a pestilence, and of the nature of evil, though it may have been productive indirectly of some good in us, by having roused up our energies. And further, if we ourselves should be seized, and for the time overpowered by it, the joy that we feel upon recovery should not prevent us acknowledging that it would have been far better, if we had never been attacked, or if the pestilence had never come into our midst.

It seems to me that that is undoubtedly the proper way to look at sin. It is in the world; we none of us love it; it is the Devil's work. But since it is there, the best choice we can make is to face it; and we shall get more good to our souls by facing it than

by ignoring it or by trying to shut up ourselves from it.

The Apostle who wrote the words of our text, threw himself into the world, to encounter its difficulties, without restraint or hesitation. He not only had his own difficulties—the thorn in his flesh; and his own fears about himself, lest, after having preached to others, he himself should be a castaway; but he looked upon sin and evil as a general enemy that had to be fought against universally;—the difficulties of his brethren in the world he looked upon as part of his own difficulties; for he hated sin in every place and in every shape. His whole life might be summed up in these words of our text: Without were fightings, within were fears. (In the particular case referred to in the text, the outside fightings were against those adversaries of his who were misleading his converts; and the inward fears were lest his converts should take his admonitions in evil part and withdraw themselves from the form of sound words he had delivered to them. In short, the fightings were against the adversaries of Christ; the fears were lest Christ's cause should lose ground and recede.)

And thus, though sin abounds in the world, God will, if we face it, turn it into a good for our souls, for grace will much more abound; and people can glory in tribulation; for tribulation may work patience, and patience experience, and experience

hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

I take, therefore, those words of St. Paul: Without were fightings, within were fears, as describing the state which we should all, if we were wise men, choose for ourselves. In this world, where sin and evil so abound,—where the Devil, like a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour,—shutting one's eyes is useless, indifference folly, and enjoyment madness. The proper description of the Christian's state in this world is:—fightings without, fears within. This is the state of things that Lent especially draws our attention to. There are the world, the flesh, and the Devil, in all shapes and at all points to fight against; and every thinking man will have great inward anxiety, lest he shall not make his calling and election sure.

Do we doubt whether Lent means *active struggling* on our part? Our model and example is our Saviour in the wilderness: and certainly *His* time, when there, was spent in active, energetic, unceasing struggling with Satan. We take erroneous views of Lent when we consider that the only proper frame of mind for each of us to wish to get into during that season is that of penitence and humiliation. Of course sin is enough to make us all penitent and humble; it is quite natural that, when we think of

the numberless ways in which we offend God, and that continually,—how lightly we estimate Christ's love for us, how feebly we implore the aid of God's Holy Spirit to enable us to resist sin,—we should be very unhappy at our great alienation from God, at our shortcomings and weaknesses. It would be no wonder if we should think that nothing is so appropriate to our state of mind, as that penitential psalm of David's, "Blot out my transgressions, wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. My sin, it is ever before me; hide thy face from it; create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me;" but, while feeling all that, we may at the same time be convinced that penitence is worthless, unless there is a doing of what is better attached to it. We may be sorry, and very properly so, for having fallen into sin; but we have to act, and show what we mean by being sorry. There is evil in the world, and we have to go out into the world; and it is then, when we again meet with sin, after we have been sorry, that we are to show whether our sorrow and penitence are worth anything or not. To bow down our heads in sorrow, and keep them there, is impossible. We are sent into this world to live in it, and the world is overrun with sin; it has seized upon God's heritage, and God resolved to free His heritage from such thraldom. He sent His son Jesus Christ to resist the Devil—to drive him out of this

world, to rescue it from his power; and we can either pass by sin, and say it is not evil, or we can withdraw ourselves from publicly meeting it, burying ourselves as much as possible in our families, our business, or our pleasure, being in reality its accomplices and allies; or we can say evil is terrible, and I bow down my heart, and lament its prevalence with fasting, in sackcloth and ashes, deploring that in me dwelleth no good thing, for the good that I would I do not; and the evil that I would not, that I do; or we might, while feeling our own weakness, determine that, with God's grace, sin shall not have dominion over me; if sin will revel through the best part of God's heritage, it shall have no help, support, or countenance from me. I may be full of fears within, but my life without shall be a constant series of fightings. We are all, inasmuch as we are Christians, debtors not to the flesh to live after the flesh; and we are bound not to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good. And how are we to walk after the Spirit, show ourselves to be soldiers of Christ, His friends and adherents,—overcome evil with good, unless we go out into the world, and boldly face the evil that is there, and say—It is both my Master's enemy and mine? I will not rush into temptation thoughtlessly and rashly; but I will not shrink from encountering evil in every shape and at all points; nor will I call it by another name. It is of the Devil, and I must withstand it, and strive to

put it down. That I know will not be done easily; but none of us must expect in this world rest and ease; in heaven there will be rest and peace, but on earth rest and peace mean halting in our Christian course, turning our back on our Christian profession, acting as traitors to our Christian engagements—which are — to fight manfully, as good soldiers of Christ, against sin, the world, and the Devil. The warfare is perilous. There must, therefore, be fears within.

Fightings without and fears within, then, are the conditions of the Christian life; but the end of the Christian life is victory, glory, triumph, and rest eternal in the heavens.

Third Sunday in Lent.

"Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children."—EPH. v. 1.

IF I would look for a guide to the feelings, that ought to be aroused in our minds at this third Sunday in Lent, it would be impossible to find a better than is presented to us by the Epistle.

We might, upon turning our thoughts to what should be the state of our minds during so long a period as Lent, wonder whether it would be possible to keep them constantly in such a state of sorrow and humiliation, as the beginning of Lent suggested.

If we look at Lent as strangers to religion, we might say, "Here are six weeks, and during the whole of that time I am to put on sad and gloomy feelings, I am to deny myself all things not actually necessary, I am to bow down and humble myself before God under a deep sense of my own unworthiness; but, as soon as Lent is over, I may return to my old way of living and do what I please, till Lent again comes round, when I shall have to undergo another six weeks of gloom and humiliation, and so on."

Now is it not likely that a great many people look at Lent with some such ideas as those? But what a

mistaken view is that! A six weeks' fasting, self-denial, and humiliation, surely will not give us permission to live, as our natural wills and inclinations choose during the rest of the year; and no serving of God, however sincere and heartfelt it may be, for one period, can render a serving of God for a subsequent period, unnecessary. If such were possible, we might well look about during that short period, which was to do duty for so much time to come, for means to prevent our religion flagging; and might try and bolster up our fainting spirits, by counting the weeks as they pass, and congratulating ourselves upon the rapidity with which we are approaching Easter.

But everybody, who has at all thought of what man's position in this world is, knows very well that his whole life, and not one particular period of it, must be in a very true sense a life of sorrow and humiliation, and that too carried so far, that it is buried in them! But if there is any reality in Christ's example and Christ's life, each man's position in this world is one, not of passive sorrow for, but of active opposition to, evil,—full of anxiety it may be, but the anxiety will be, how he may save his soul alive by acting.

It is not that religion makes the life of the Christian one bit more arduous than it need be; but it clearly teaches that life is a very serious matter—made exceedingly difficult by the presence of sin and evil besetting a man's path on all sides; and that

there really is no ease, peace, and safety to be found this side the grave. To give any other idea of life is deceiving men,—whispering peace when there is none; and lulling men into security, when Satan is up and about, seeking whom he may devour.

Still, undoubted as is the fact that our whole lives must be in reality one continual Lent, the watchwords of which season are a sorrow and humiliation, and an anxiety, which nevertheless find vent in active struggling against evil, yet sorrow, humiliation, and anxiety are not all; there is engendered by living a life like Christ's, something of that meek, gentle, and loving spirit that was so peculiarly His. Religion, therefore, while declaring to us that a Christian must be sorrowful and humble, truly penitent, busy, energetic, never at rest, with fightings without and fears within, says also that Christ's spirit breathes on men here; and then there bloom forth, like spring flowers in winter-time,—joy, peace, gentleness,—sweet softening influences that make labour light, self-denial easy, anxiety hopeful; thus bringing forth here and there in this life, what will be the whole bright covering of the floor in heaven.

Lent, therefore, is no season of humiliation, which, properly passed, gives immunity for the remainder of the year;—nay, our whole lives are rather a continual Lent, full of sorrow and anxiety, but lighted up with joy, peace, bright hope and expectations.

Let us take the trouble (and it is well worth our while) of noticing how our Church tries to guide our minds, as the weeks go by.

First, there is Ash Wednesday, and here we are bidden to turn unto the Lord with all our hearts, with fasting, and with weeping and with mourning. Everything is pitched in the lowest key of sorrow and humiliation, as befitteth sinners approaching a pure and holy God, and feeling unworthy, not only of acceptance, but even of notice.

On the Sunday following, we are reminded that the time is short, and that present opportunities must not be neglected, for the day of salvation is now present, and, if not made use of, might pass by, and, when once gone, could not be recalled; but that we should show ourselves Christians by approving ourselves in patience, in afflictions, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by long-suffering, by love unfeigned, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left; though sorrowful we are yet to be always rejoicing, though poor we should yet labour so as to make many rich, and, though we had nothing, we should make ourselves as happy and contented, as if we possessed all things.

And so that week passes; and, as the next Sunday comes round, we are exhorted by the Lord Jesus to consider the way in which we have begun, and to abound in it more and more, and do our best to please

God by living according to His will; and His will concerning us is that we should be holy, and pure, and high-minded, standing aloof from anything that would debase our thoughts or our hands. We must not defile our hearts with what is impure; we must not defile our hands with money or gain, that is connected with going beyond and defrauding our brother;—for God has not called us to uncleanness, either of heart or hand, but unto holiness.

And now to-day, the burden of our text is that we must be followers of God, as dear children. We must walk in love as Christ also hath loved us; and now impurity and covetousness are not to be so much as once named among us. We are to live as becometh saints. We are not only to avoid open shameful vices, but they are not even to be mentioned among us; the idea of them debases our minds; we get into bad company by becoming familiar with the sound of what they are; and those who may consider themselves as God's dear children ought to be so far from committing these acts, that they do not even speak of them; and then, we are advised to put a general guard upon our lips, and to avoid not only profane and wicked words and talking, but even foolish conversation, and even jesting.

Some of us may think that the Apostle goes very far here. We should at once be ready to agree with him, when he denounces profane blasphemy, foul and

bad language, laughing at words and things sacred and holy from their connection; but we may hesitate a little, when we are asked by him to avoid even jesting; he says it is not suitable or convenient for people, whose position in life is a matter of such serious concern. The Apostle may think that if *we* had such views of sin, and of what sin has done for the world, as *he* had, we should hardly be inclined to jest, even in matters that were trifling and unimportant; but a good way of estimating the value of the Apostle's injunction is to imagine some friend of ours, who, perhaps now, has the art of entertaining us with his wit and humour, employing that wit and cleverness in saying, not sharp and sparkling things, as he could, if he liked, but kind and gentle things, that touch our hearts, and cheer us up, and strengthen us in our good resolves. Some of us may know such an one,—one who has the happy knack, the Christian art of talking in such a way, as never to let us go away from him or her, without feeling that we have been softened and cheered and made better,—less irritable, less peevish, less inclined to sneer and laugh at things, and more disposed to take things seriously, and go at our duty with a cheerful and a willing heart. In that light, we might think the Apostle's injunction well worth observing, and jesting well exchanged for what would increase so much the happiness and well-being of the world.

Fourth Sunday in Lent.

"We are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free."—
GAL. iv. 31.

IF we were to ask ourselves what the *aim* or *object* of religion was, we should be taking but a partial one-sided view of it, in replying that the main end or object of it was to learn how to live decent, pure, and honest lives. A reflecting man would not be satisfied with that answer; his heart would soon suggest to him that living an upright life might be in *accordance* with what would satisfy him; but the first desire, aim, and purpose of his life must be a drawing near unto Him, in whom all things lived, and moved, and had their being.

Let us consider that this Being, towards whom our hearts naturally aspire, is a Person, and our feelings take shape in this way: Here is the world, and I am in it; and the great Creator and Governor of it is He, from whom my breath and life are derived; and He is constantly looking down upon this world and all that is in it. Nothing escapes His eye; no human *being's* conduct is a matter of indifference to Him;

indeed, so peculiarly close is He to us all, that we call Him our Father; and as a father watches, notices, and observes his children, so does God notice and observe us. He is Himself holy, just, and good: so much so that He hates everything that has a touch or taint of impurity and imperfection about it.

If all that is the case, aspirations cannot possibly be detached from conduct; and our conduct must be in some way such as can approve itself unto God; and, if improvement or development of graces be possible by living, our way of life must have a tendency to develope us, by degrees at least, into something which God will at last look upon, if not with satisfaction, at any rate with patience.

Now what rules are possible for making us holy men and women, such as God can at last love? Shall we say: Concentrate all your thoughts upon God Himself, and think not that there is any other being in the universe who can claim your allegiance; reverence, worship, and pay supreme homage to Him alone; debase not your ideas of Him by fancying Him to be like any created thing; any image or likeness of Him would only materialise and dishonour Him; venerate Him so much, that you would shrink from even mentioning His name, or anything that belonged to Him, but with the greatest humility and respect; set apart one day especially, on which to worship Him, lest, by not having a fixed day dedicated to Him, you neglect

Him; and remember that that day is a memorial of His having made the world and all that is in it, and an example to you how a perfect life consists of work *and* reflection?

Then, as for rules to guide us further in our intercourse with our fellow-men, shall we say—Honour and respect your parents, your elders, and those who seem to be set over you; look upon the lives of your fellow-men as sacred; restrain your lusts and passions; respect property; tell the truth as between man and man; avoid looking with eyes of covetousness and envy upon the good things and possessions of others?

If such rules are laid down and we keep them, shall we grow into something pure and holy, such as God can love? Many people have replied yes; and have set about living a life founded upon such rules, and have looked upon themselves as righteous, when they had at all succeeded in living up to them. But St. Paul said—No; in the first place, no one could keep such rules perfectly; and, even if any one could do so, there was still something wanting; and yet the rules were very good, he said, and, if any set of rules could make a man righteous before God, these were they. These rules are the Ten Commandments, given by God himself on Mount Sinai to Moses for the Jewish people. And we know what a storm of obloquy and reproach St. Paul brought about his head, when he

declared that this law,—even God's law,—could not make a man righteous before God. He was instantly accused not only of abandoning the law of his fathers, but of wishing also to subvert all order and morality. What, however, he declared, was simply that the law was men's schoolmaster to bring them unto Christ, but that it was by faith in Him, through grace, that they were justified; and so far from wishing to do away with God's commandments, he only was anxious to put them on a higher footing. He wished most fervently and entirely to see men raised to God; but he was convinced of the insufficiency of the law to do so much; he looked to and pointed men to Christ.

We shall see the matter more clearly if we put the case again: Here we are in this world, under the eyes of a pure, just, and holy God, to whom our hearts instinctively long to mount; we are impure and sinful, both by nature and by practice; still we feel that in God and in His favour is our only hope; across the chasm, that sin has made between us and God, we are continually looking; a means of bridging that chasm has been promised; Christ Jesus is the mediator. He was promised, even from the earliest days; in order to prepare His way, and to elevate men towards becoming fit for an union with God, the law was given; men were told to do this and abstain from that; sin was defined; and no one could say, with

God's commandments staring him in the face, that he did not know what sin and evil were.

But St. Paul argued that a knowledge of sin and evil could not make a man righteous before God; nay, that that very knowledge only made man the more guilty, inasmuch as there was something inward, constantly bringing him into captivity to the sin that was in his members, and the more clearly he became aware of it, the more clearly appeared his guilt. His cry was —"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But then he answers the cry by thanking God that Jesus Christ his Lord had delivered him. Could he then continue in sin that grace might abound? God forbid, he says. He is dead to sin, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ his Lord; and how shall any one who is dead to sin live any longer therein? The law, therefore, was men's schoolmaster to bring them unto Christ, that they might be justified by faith; but after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster, but are all the children of God in Christ Jesus.

Jesus Christ, therefore, is the mediator between God and man, and through Him men become sons of God; they are no more ordered to do this and abstain from that; nor is their nearness to God or favour with Him reckoned by their being able to carry out His commands; but they are looked upon, as children in the house. Love rules their actions; without law, with-

out being ordered, they do more than they ever did before; and are accepted by God, not through fulfilling His commands, for they are in a state of liberty, but through having been united to him in Christ.

Bearing this in mind, we shall see the force of the Apostle's reasoning in the Epistle of this morning. He is arguing with men who still trust to the Law for justification; and he says, You, who insist upon remaining under the Law, and refuse the privileges of being sons of God through Jesus Christ, listen to the allegory of Abraham and his two sons, Ishmael and Isaac. The one would, even when grown up, still be a slave; the other was the free child in the house: both would possibly obey—the one, however, by compulsion, the other by love: the one would ever remain in a state of slavery, which might result in alienation or in being cast out altogether; the other was free, and remained in the house for ever.

To Jews of that day the allegory would be very striking, for they especially prided themselves upon being the children of Abraham through Isaac, who was to be the heir of God's promises to Abraham; but St. Paul argued that, if they were under the Law, they were not free, but bondmen, and therefore sons of Ishmael; Christians alone were free, being children of God, having been relieved from the bondage of the Law, being united to God in Christ.

These portions of Scripture, appointed to be read

as the Epistles at this season, seem to have been selected with a great deal of care and discernment. Nothing could be more appropriate as a suggestion on this particular Sunday than this allegory of the bond-son and the free.

If we have been at all carefully following our services during the last three weeks, we shall have noticed how we have had the heinousness of sin and the difficulty of leading a pure and holy life continually brought before us. The holiness of God has been dwelt upon; and we have been constantly reminded of what He demands from us. No unholy impure person can have any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. We are exhorted to deplore our shortcomings and imperfections, to lament our unworthiness, and to come before God with humble contrite hearts. And now, when we are prostrate, as it were,—in the dust before God, the style of our services changes; and it is suggested to us that by our own merits we can never become accepted before God; that all our striving in our own strength is useless and unavailing; if we rely upon works, we are lost. Christ has come a mediator between God and man, and through Him we become sons of God; we are no more under the Law, to be judged by our fulfilling God's commandments; we are free children in God's family; and, though frail and sinful, and unworthy *of ourselves*, we are united to Him through Christ by

faith and love. Though pervaded with deep sorrow and contrition that we were ever enemies to God, we comfort ourselves with thinking that the obedience of Jesus Christ in his life, culminating in his death on the cross, by grace becomes ours; we are no longer enemies, we are united to Christ, and receive of His strength and holiness, through His Spirit, which He sends down from heaven to us, and by means of the grace communicated to us through His sacraments; and, though free, no longer bound to the Law, we do not use our liberty for a cloak of wickedness; but Christ's grace and strength enable us to put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

The practical question for us, therefore, is this—We are in this world; and our duty, our obligation, the necessity of our being, is to draw near to God,—to become united to Him in bonds of intimacy, love, and likeness. From Him we derive our being; in Him only can we live. What, then, is the way by which we can approach and become united to God? The natural man, the philosopher, would say—Practise virtue and morality, institute a pure exalted style of worship; and you elevate yourself, and may become holy. St. Paul says, there is in that case so much of Do this, and Abstain from that, and man is so weak, and his heart so inclined to evil, that no man can

make himself just before God. Under rules, under the Law, man must ever remain a slave. He is no true son, while separated from God, but a bond-woman's child merely. Christ, however, came to give us the privilege of children, to redeem us from being obliged to serve God from the outside, to release us from the servitude of the Law, to give us freedom, to unite us to God in Himself by birth and nature. And—he continued—let a man try whether he cannot live a holier purer life by being within God's family than if he did his utmost by obedience, being a slave. Christ is the only way, by which men can come unto God, and men can only please God, by abiding in Christ.

Let us go a little more closely into the matter. What is it that Christ has done and is doing for us? He has taken our flesh, and, uniting the manhood to the Godhead, gives us the privilege of birth or family. We have been made God's children through Christ, and are loved by him; our strangeness is removed; we are, to reverse the manner of speaking, bone of Christ's bone and flesh of His flesh; and are purified, elevated, dignified. And now, after we have been reconciled to the Father by Him, it would be but a half measure, if we were left in that condition to carry on our perfection or salvation, alone and unaided. It is not so. Christ now daily gives us of His spirit, comes near us, and dwells with us; gives us His grace

and His sacraments; shows us an example; becomes our Friend, Who, though unseen by fleshly eye, yet comforts, cheers, checks, and teaches us; and as we in our weakness and feebleness sigh forth, "O Lord, show us the way wherein we should walk, for we lift up our souls unto Thee," we feel His hand put forth to guide our steps; and without rules, without law, without compulsion, inasmuch as we are free children of God, joint-heirs with Christ, we find that a power has been given us of crucifying the flesh with the affections and lusts.

Let us therefore remember, even in the midst of our sorrow and humiliation of heart on account of our many weaknesses, shortcomings, and imperfections, that in Christ we become God's children; in Christ is our best means of overcoming sin and evil; in Christ is our best hope of living holy, virtuous, and upright lives; and in Christ, through love, we have stronger and higher incentives to self-sacrifice and self-denial than in any table of pains and penalties.

Fifth Sunday in Lent.

"For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"—HEB. ix. 13, 14.

MY brethren, though it is still Lent, the style of our services, as we remarked last Sunday, is changed.

It seems taken for granted that, during the first three Sundays, we bowed our heads in humiliation, and did our best to think of all our shortcomings and imperfections. If we were at all sincere, and made our hearts keep pace with our words and expressions, we should have been in no slight degree cast down and overwhelmed with the weight of our sin and misery: there is no man who could not, if he were true to his own heart, write bitter things against himself. It may be said that we are not always intent upon our failings and imperfections; but it is undoubtedly true that, if we were to set about thinking of the distance, that lies between the tenor of our thoughts and lives and the perfection that God

requires from us, we should acknowledge that really there was no health in us, but that we were miserable sinners, deserving God's wrath and vengeance.

Now the beginning of Lent demands a sort of review and self-examination from all of us; if we have any consciousness of sin and imperfection in our hearts, it is our duty to set out our sins and weaknesses in the light of God's countenance; nothing ought now to escape us, we ought to probe our hearts to the bottom, we ought to pray that no sin may be allowed to hide itself there—in short, it is a time of strict self-examination, impartially, nay severely and unsparingly performed.

My brethren, I hope we have not spared ourselves; —if there is any very bad secret sin, eating into our hearts, it is to be hoped that we have drawn it forth, and spread it out like an open book before God—nay, if there is only some slight weakness, that is separating between us and God, it is to be hoped that we have looked it in the face in all strictness and severity, and have put a mark of sin against it, and called it by its proper name. If we have been true and sincere, and unsparing in that, I think we shall none of us be feeling very joyous, gay, and lighthearted.

It is taken for granted that such was the tone of our feelings during the first three Sundays in Lent; then, last Sunday, lest we should be cast down with overmuch sorrow, we were reminded that there was

a great difference between the Law and the Gospel—under the Law a man was a slave, under the Gospel he was free—and, though we do worthily deserve to be punished, yet by the comfort of God's grace we may mercifully be relieved. And, in the Gospel of that day, our blessed Lord is brought before us, as healing people who were diseased, and feeding a hungry fainting multitude, proving Himself to be full of thoughtfulness, sympathy, pity, and compassion; and, of a truth, the prophet that should come into the world.

To-day, the note struck is—Christ is come an High Priest of good things to come, and has obtained eternal redemption for us. The blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sanctified in old times to the purifying of the flesh; but the blood of Christ can purge men's consciences from dead works to serve the living God, and those who are called by Him receive the promise of eternal life: and, in the Gospel of to-day, we read that no one can convince Christ of sin; nay, so life-giving are Christ's words, that, if a man keep His saying, he shall never see death. The Jews thought that in Abraham lay the source of all their blessings. Abraham was a forerunner of Christ, preparing His way, looking forward to His coming, and in anticipation rejoicing to witness it. Yes, long before Abraham was, Christ was in the bosom of the Father; no man or created angel,

but the very and eternal Jehovah. There is no doubt, whatever, that there is a great deal of comfort in those suggestions. We must not forget the state of mind, the beginning of Lent ought to have produced in us, we can then welcome with grateful hearts the assurance that pardon, peace, and redemption may yet be ours. How sweet is rest to the weary and heavy laden! how welcome is a harbour to the storm-tossed mariner! how pleasing is the sight of home to the footsore, limping, wanderer! how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings! How joyfully then ought we to hear that Christ is come, an High Priest of good things to come! This coming of Christ is represented in a way, that it would be well worth our while to understand. It is not only instructive, but admonitory and comforting also.

The High Priest among the Jews was the person who made atonement unto God every year for the sins of the people;—being a mortal man himself, he was not pure enough to enter into God's immediate presence without the blood of a victim. Our blessed Lord, however, shed His own blood on Mount Calvary, and went into God's presence with it to make atonement for the sins of the whole world; and there was no occasion for Him to do this every year, like the high priest of old, but Christ was *once* offered to bear the sins of many. We learn, therefore, that the

atonement our blessed Lord makes for us is of the highest and most perfect kind; if our sins are not forgiven, blotted out, and done away, the fault lies not in the incompetency of our high priest. But that is not all.

Eastern nations have very strong ideas about bodily defilement. We get some notion of what is meant by it, in that rebuke which our Lord addressed to the Pharisees, when they wondered that His disciples sat down to eat with hands that may have, in the market or in the business of the day, touched something that was looked upon as unclean. The Priests and Scribes of the Jews would not enter Pilate's judgment-hall, where our Lord was being tried, for they believed that they would be defiled and rendered unfit to keep the passover. We read that, now-a-days in India, natives would feel themselves polluted, if they accidentally ate anything that was cooked by a stranger or low-caste person. Touching a sick person, or touching what an irreligious person has touched, is considered to bring defilement; and people have been known, after having looked upon some unholy sight, to hold themselves unclean, until they have washed their eyes in some sacred water.

Among the Jews—to take the reference of our text—if a man touched a corpse he was held to be *unclean* for seven days, and forbidden to enter the

tabernacle; and he was to be purified with the ashes of a sacrificed and burnt heifer. The blood of bulls and of goats was ordered for other cases of defilement.

The sources of defilement were almost innumerable, and, until the man defiled had purified himself according to the law, he was not allowed, nor considered fit, to approach God's tabernacle—but the provisions made by the law were looked upon as quite efficacious; and the worshipper, once purged from any of his defilements by these appointed rites, had no more conscience of sins.

Now the argument in the text is this—if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies and purifies the flesh, that is, removes defilement of body, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who was so pure Himself, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God?

Try to realise for a moment that idea of bodily defilement; imagine any one feeling it in all sincerity and reality, loathing and shrinking from himself, absolutely hating his own defiled flesh, and watching the means of purification being got ready for him, and then applied, and in a moment all his defilement removed: if the man really felt all that, as we can imagine many many thousands have done in the world, how welcome would be the change! how joyful the feeling of being cleansed! how delightful the

sense that he may now again love himself! his uncleanness is removed; all loathsomeness has been cast off; he is a pure new man again.

Not otherwise is defilement of soul: it is quite as real, quite as perceptible, quite as worthy to be deplored. Have any of us during Lent felt that we were very miserable sinners, that there was no health in us, that our sins have separated between us and God, and that our souls have been as truly defiled by contact with sin, as any person's body in old time was looked upon, as defiled by contact with a corpse? If we have not felt that we have been tainted and corrupted by sin, we have probably not been so severe and unsparing in our self-examination, as we ought to have been; but, if we have felt the heinousness of sin, and the defilement its contact communicates to our hearts, and if we are truly concerned about it, then we are in a state where the words of the text are indeed the most joyful, that can be imagined. Christ is come an High Priest of good things to come. He has offered Himself upon Mount Calvary; and His blood, pure, and shed under the guidance of the Eternal Spirit, can purge our consciences, cleanse our hearts, and remove all sense of defilement from our souls.

So much done is a great deal. We are Christians; but sin alienates us from God, defiles and contaminates us. In Christ's blood all that defilement and

contamination are washed away, and we may come to God to be loved by Him, fully certain that He will not stand aloof from us; for He Himself has appointed the means, and is satisfied with their efficacy.

But that is not quite all. Indeed, if it were; we should be as the Israelites of old were, in a hopeless circle, where the same changes of sin and purification were for ever recurring.

The blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, removed the sense of bodily defilement, but did no more; they did not prevent defilement in the future; but the blood of Christ purges our consciences from dead works to serve the living God. It makes new men and women of us, removes us from that dead level of struggling to live up to God's commandments, and failing miserably in our own strength, and brings us into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

St. Paul always speaks of the Christian as being able to do more than other men; for Christ not only came to cleanse us from our past sins, but to make us, in the future, children of God. We have a new nature put within us; and not only so, but Christ comes with His grace, and His sacraments and His Spirit, and helps us onward in our walk through life; and as a further means of grace He points us to the way, in which He walked while on earth; and the

result of it all is, if we make use of it—not only forgiveness of past sins, which the slain victim gave the Israelite of old, but a lifting up of our endeavours from the dead level of fruitless struggling to an acceptable serving of God, as dear children.

Such is the promise held out to us, as Easter approaches. Are we sad and sorrowful at the sense of the defilement our souls have contracted? Christ is come an High Priest of good things to come; and His blood, pure and spotless, shed under the guidance of the Eternal Spirit, shall purge our consciences from dead works to serve the living God, not with the servile obedience of aliens, but with the oneness of heart and feeling of dear children.

Sixth Sunday in Lent.

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."
PHILIP. ii. 5.

WE have now arrived at the last Sunday in Lent; and we cannot do better than look to our Church's services, to guide us to the feelings and sentiments most becoming the day and season.

We have been led on by our services, Sunday after Sunday, in a way, that could not fail, if followed, to advance us very considerably in our spiritual progress.

At our first entrance into Lent, we were reminded of the urgent necessity of repentance, of abstinence, of subduing our flesh to the Spirit; of the fact that we were called unto holiness, of the duty of walking as children of light; then, in a little time, lest we should be overpowered with the burden of our sins, we have it suggested to us that, though for our evil deeds we do worthily deserve to be punished, yet by the comfort of God's grace we may mercifully be relieved; then, after that, as a further means of solace, we are reminded that Christ has come, and He is the Mediator

of a new covenant; and sins may be purged away in His blood, and we may receive the promise of eternal life.

Justly, therefore, as God may be angry with us, we have it suggested to us that mercy is the distinguishing style of God's dealings with us, and that, though sin may very much abound, yet grace doth still more abound.

For all that, the work of grace and mercy has not been accomplished, but at a very great cost. We may feel joyful at the thought of how God looks mercifully upon us, and accepts us graciously and comforts us, not allowing us to be cast into despair by overmuch sorrow; but joy and gladness are not to be unmixed with other feelings. We are reminded how tenderly God has loved us,—so tenderly that He gave His only begotten Son, to take upon Him our flesh. And the result of His taking our flesh? It led to His suffering death upon the Cross. In the midst, therefore, of our joy and gladness at being redeemed, we must not forget what the price of our redemption was. We are reminded that our blessed Lord was in the heavens, in the form of God—so highly exalted that He was only claiming His due right by making Himself equal with God; but that, in compassion for mankind, and to redeem them from sin, He divested Himself of His glory in the heavens, and came down to earth, taking upon Him our flesh

and becoming obedient to hunger, thirst, pain, sorrow, and anxiety, and all the weaknesses of humanity, sin only excepted; and now, being found in fashion as a man, He was seized upon by Death and Satan; and all the powers of Hell were let loose to render His last days on earth as bitter as man could experience them. While, therefore, we may be supposed to be ready to glide into a state of joy and gladness at hearing the promise of eternal life being prepared for us, we are shown how much it cost our blessed Lord to become able to offer it us. The price He paid was humiliation and suffering carried to the utmost extent.

The proper feeling, therefore, that should rule our hearts to-day, even in the prospect of eternal life, is humility that our sins should have necessitated the subjecting of the Son of God, who so tenderly loved us, and was so exalted in heaven, to such cruel indignities.

Let us consider for a moment what our blessed Lord had to put up with, in the life, which ended in that most horrible death of the cross. The manger-cradle at Bethlehem, and the attempt made by Herod upon His life, necessitating the flight into Egypt, were emblems of the reception He was going to meet with on earth.

But His ministry had first to be entered upon, before the dark powers of hell could gather themselves against him. And it was then that the cloud burst.

His temptation by Satan in the wilderness contained more misery, privation, and suffering, both of body and mind, than fall to the lot of men in general during the longest life. He was plunged into poverty to the very lips; He led a life more precarious than that of the birds of the air and the wild creatures of the field, for He had nowhere to lay His head. His friends disbelieved in Him, and unsympathisingly attempted to divert Him from the career He was appearing—as they thought—to be about to drift into; His enemies constantly thwarted Him, at one time taking up stones to stone Him, at another reviling Him, as being a Samaritan and having a devil. His whole soul brimmed over with anxiety and impatience at the way in which His work seemed to linger, in spite of all His efforts to forward and accomplish it. Snares were laid on all sides for Him by enemies wishing to entangle Him in either some blasphemous, or, at any rate, treasonable acknowledgment. As He approaches the end of His career, nothing can be more pathetic than that lamentation of His over the imminent fate of Jerusalem. Her ruin is a measure of His own failure. Then came the treachery of Judas;—nothing was hid from Him—how miserable must that falseness of his have made Him, and the feeling that one who had eaten and drunk with Him would yet lift up his heel against Him, and could for thirty pieces of silver sell his Friend to almost certain

death! How dreadful must have been His agony in the garden of Gethsemane, when His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground; and His prayer was that the bitter cup of suffering then held to His mouth might, if possible, be spared Him! He had taken two of His nearest and dearest friends with Him, as He went apart to pray, thinking that they would be some comfort and support to Him in His misery; how deserted and abandoned must He have felt, when He found that for very weariness they were unable to keep even their eyes open; however good the intentions of their hearts might have been, the weakness of their human nature made them useless as comforters! When the actual betrayal came, the whole body of His friends and disciples took fright and fled. He was brought before the high priest, in whose court He found everybody clamouring for His death; among the crowd one of His most trusted disciples had crept in unknown, and, being challenged as belonging to Jesus, denied thrice in the hearing of his Master that he had ever known Him. Then He was hurried away from one court of justice to another; and at last, after having been condemned to death by Pilate the Roman governor, though He might have obtained His release by an act of customary grace at the feast, He had the chagrin of hearing His own countrymen, men of the highest piety and religion, the inhabitants of that very city

Jerusalem, whose fate lay so close at His heart, choosing the life of an outlaw and a robber before His, and in spite and malice leaving Him to die. Then He was scourged; and the soldiers mocked Him with a crown of thorns and a sham purple robe. He was at length crucified, and they that passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads and mocking Him. At last He died; but a soldier to make doubly sure, or in contempt, ran a spear into His side though dead. He was taken down and laid in a tomb, but His enemies' doubts and suspicions could not be laid to rest, their hate followed Him even here; they demanded that His sepulchre should be sealed, and a watch placed about the entrance, lest the fraud, that they had attributed to Him in life, should be exercised in some way with reference to Him, even though dead.

These are some of the indignities, to become obedient to which our blessed Lord emptied Himself of His glory in the heavens. He came down to earth, knowing what He would have to undergo. He underwent them intentionally to redeem mankind. He had been, in heaven in the form of God, equal with God; and He became poor and lowly, entering into a state where privation and misery were going naturally to be His lot; choosing also a career which He knew would be accompanied with disappointment, vexation, solitariness; and end in agony of mind and

body, and in a most painful and disgraceful death. And all this He knowingly and voluntarily took upon Himself for the good of man, that they might obtain pardon of their sins, mercy in the sight of their heavenly Father, grace, and acceptance. It was a case of unbounded self-renouncement, self-sacrifice, and self-humiliation, for the sake of a grand ulterior gain certainly. The gain, however, was not for Himself, but for others; but His love for these others was so great, that He thought the gain for them well worth the loss and pain to Himself. He hesitated not to lay down His glory; He shrank not from any consequences that might ensue—in fact He knew that those consequences would be a life of suffering, culminating in a death upon the cross; and yet He went and voluntarily met them.

While, therefore, we may for a moment be inclined to rejoice and triumph that mercy, grace, and pardon are at length being prepared for us, we cannot, however, give way to our exultation, for we remember what the price is, that is being exacted from Him—in payment. We feel humble, we hush our voices, we step slowly, reverently, as we enter into the precincts, as it were, of this Passion Week, the inclosure of Christ's most intense and condensed sufferings. But while there, pondering upon all that He went through, we find our gaze turned from ourselves, who caused those sufferings,—from, too, the sufferings themselves,

to Him who is undergoing them; and in His figure we see so much love, so much absence of thought of self, so much humility, so great a determination to do what the seriousness of the position demanded, in spite of all the self-renouncement and self-sacrifice it entailed, that we stand transfixed with wonder and admiration, and think that there could be no form among the sons of men so angelic, so divine as His; and then, as we gaze, the words of our text echo in our ears: Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, so that He thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

It is, as if the advice given to us was—Do you in your degree, imitating Him, though at an immeasurable distance, put away all feelings of pride, all thoughts of self. Let the desire to do what the circumstances of the position demand from you, at any cost of self-sacrifice, be the feeling that sways your hearts. What are worldly pleasures, worldly gratifications, worldly riches, worldly advantages, worldly dignities, but flickerings of sparks that shine brightly for a moment, as if with all their might, and the next moment disappear, pressed out of existence by the all-invading darkness? Can then such faint,

lightless, flickering sparks attract your thoughts? Look at Christ Jesus, thinking only of the salvation of the world. He puts aside His dignity in heaven, His glory and pomp before the throne of God, and takes upon Himself the form of a man, poor, lowly, lightly esteemed, liable to be exposed to indignities such as befall the lowest and most wretched of our race. And behold what the result has been in His case! God, in return for that, has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name; that, at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Thus He came down from heaven, having divested Himself of the glory He had with the Father before the world was, and returns thither with all the additional glories, of redemption, fresh and bright about His head; His humiliation became to Him a rich source of increased and multiplied glory.

And how is it with those of us who have tried here on earth to invest ourselves with the same mind, as was also in Christ Jesus? The Collect prays, first, that we may here on earth follow the example of our Lord's patience, and then, that hereafter we may be made partakers of His resurrection. And is not that all we should or could desire? To be made partakers of His resurrection! That this should be the end of

our career as suffering, patient, self-denying Christians; to go and be with Him, away from the doubts and difficulties, trials and indignities of this life; with Him, who made us sons of God by taking our flesh; who reconciled the Father to us by His life of suffering, and His death of shame, and His blood shed upon the cross; who, though gone from among us, sends down His Spirit, and gives us His grace and sacraments, and has left us His word, His life, His example, to direct, sustain, and cheer our darksome path; to go and be with Him, with whom we have walked in life, whose arm we have felt and leaned upon; to be made partakers of His resurrection,—that will amply, and more than amply, reward us for anything we may have been induced for His sake to undergo in life. But we have as yet not reached that happy state; at present we are in the midst of sin, hampered and fettered by it. The number of God's elect is not yet made up; the image, reflection, or remembrance of Christ's sufferings and death is even now being presented to our view; we are called upon to look at His agony and bloody sweat, to listen to His prayer in the garden of Gethsemane, His cry of desolation and desertion on the cross; and we are asked to remember that He was the Son of God, and that He came down from heaven to submit to this in all humility, for man and man's salvation. And the lesson which we are to learn by it is, not to give way and exult in our

chances of salvation, but, while rejoicing that mercy is in store for us, to deplore in all humility that the price exacted for it was so great. But great as was the price, the love and self-renouncement that dictated it were full of grace and beauty, Christ's own feelings, feelings that God loves. And therefore our best exhortation is—Brethren, let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; and, if it is in you, then, as you follow now the example of His patience, so shall you hereafter be made partakers of His resurrection.

Good Friday.

"This is the covenant I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."—HEBREWS x. 16, 17.

OUR Church looks upon this day, Good Friday, as the day, when the more arduous conditions of the new covenant or agreement between God and man have been gone through and accomplished.

The day, therefore, gloomy and sad as it would in its natural aspect be, being looked upon as the harbinger of a bright and blessed future, loses, even ere it passes, half its blackness, by the reflection of the brightness, that is impatiently awaiting its close to show itself. Indeed, all this may be said to be part of the universal truth—that means employed to produce a certain end, irksome though they may be in themselves, are disregarded, in anticipation of the benefits looked forward to in the result.

To understand more clearly what our Scripture lesson in the Epistle of to-day is intending to set before us, we ought to have a very vivid idea of the

vastness of the moral evil, that has been raging in the world on all sides. We have only to look around us and see things as they present themselves to our own eyes, examine our own hearts, read what even profane writers say in deploring the prevalence of misery and depravation everywhere, to become alive to the reality of the presence of moral evil in every corner of the world. If we go to Scripture, where we are, in a certain sense, let behind the scenes, we see moral evil entering for the first time into the world; we are struck with the opposition the Almighty placed against it in the persons of His human creatures; and we are awe-stricken at the grief and indignation, to speak humanly, its entrance into the world produced in the heart of the Almighty Creator of the universe. If we look a little closer, we see the Almighty devising means by which mercy and truth might meet together—righteousness and peace might kiss each other. If for a moment we feel inclined to make objections, thinking that the Almighty need not have allowed evil to enter at all into the world—that world created by Him,—and that, even after it had gained an entrance, it might very easily be by Him removed, if its presence there caused Him grief and pain, we may satisfy ourselves, after a little reflection, with the thought, that anything like freedom of will and choice must make moral evil at least possible. Things without will or choice, such as a

tree, a stone, the earth, the all-powerful sun itself, obey God's laws without possibility of pause or failure. Their obedience is blind, and, in comparison with that of men and women, who have wills to choose and hearts to love, is worthless. The power of serving and obeying God from love is also the power of rebelling and refusing to worship Him, through hate or indifference. And men did refuse Him obedience; they made use of the freedom of will their Creator had endowed them with to say, We will not have this One to reign over us. To win back the world, then, did God arrange the scheme of redemption.

The first step towards it was an assurance that, in fulness of time, the seed of the woman who sinned should bruise the head of the serpent who tempted. But the *promise* of redemption did not accomplish much. Men's hearts were too hard and alienated; and the wickedness of man on the earth became so great, that God resolved upon the destruction of the creatures that he had been pleased to make. Noah and his family, however, found grace in the Almighty's eyes, inasmuch as he, in the midst of a corrupt and disobedient world, was found comparatively faithful. As the rainbow, after the assuaging of the waters, shone in the clouds, reaching down to earth, mercy so far got the better of justice, that the Almighty is represented as inclined to make allowance for man's weakness, and promising never again

to destroy the earth with a flood. Still men's hearts were as yet too alienated, too stiff and stubborn, to be thus brought back to God: they even yet refused to serve Him.

As a farther step in this scheme of redemption, the Almighty chose Abraham out of the rest of the world, and made an express covenant or agreement with him and with his seed. It was to be love, protection, and blessing on God's part; they were to make, on their side, God's service the law of their lives, and incumbent upon their children. The remembrance, however, of this covenant or agreement became, during the sojourn of Abraham's descendants in slavery in Egypt, faint and unproductive. God renewed it therefore to Moses, and promised that the Israelites should be His chosen people, and that He would love and guide them, and keep them separate from all others; while they engaged themselves to be a sort of barrier against the idolatry, that was from all sides inundating the world. Thus it was thought the world might be prepared for the accomplishment of the scheme of redemption.

To bring the Jews still nearer to Him, He gave them commandments, setting forth what He liked and disliked—a protest against evil rather than as a guide of life. As emblems of the means by which moral evil might be atoned for, as figures, shadows, of the satisfaction demanded by the nature of sin, as earnests

of the pardon and acceptance that might one day be the sinner's, certain sacrifices were appointed; and the blood of bulls and goats flowed about the Jewish altar, while the high priest made a figurative atonement for the sins of the people. But moral evil still reigned triumphant in the world. The law, with its rules and regulations, and pains and penalties, and provisions for symbolising pardon and acceptance, was not wholly ineffectual, it was preparing the way for Christ; it was the shadow of the reality that was coming in God's good time.

We may say, therefore, that the covenant of the Old Testament was full of grace and mercy; but chiefly in disclosing the mind and will of the Almighty. The world, however, still remained alienated from God. "Do this, and thou shalt live" was, in man's present state, an empty offer. The strain of the law was too great.

But now another covenant is brought into operation; and the main parties to that covenant are God the Father and God the Son, Jesus Christ, and whatever share man has in it is, through Jesus Christ being the Son of man. In speaking of the terms of this covenant, we may, without irreverence, use ideas and words which are really applicable only to human beings.

God the Father had such love for fallen man, that He made an agreement with the Second Person in

the Trinity, God the Son, to confer, certain conditions having been fulfilled, great rewards on Him, and great blessings on the human race—His people. The conditions were that He (the Son) should give up His great glory in the heavens, and come down and take human flesh, and undergo all the hardships and indignities, trials and temptations, that the devil or man could in that humble position bring against Him; that, when man, He should walk obedient to His heavenly Father, and live such a life, as man himself should have lived, had he never fallen; seeking, in every respect, not His own will, but that of His heavenly Father, and giving man a most perfect example of how they ought to walk and please God; that now, being a man, He should shrink from no suffering that could possibly happen to man; that since the Almighty Father hated and turned away His face from sin, so should He, the Son, as man, consent to see His heavenly Father's face turned away for a time from Him; that in his human life He would have to submit to all the pains of mental anxiety, disappointment in all its bitterness, to isolation of position, with all the blankness produced by the absence of all sympathy, to reviling and misrepresentation; that He would have to endure all the wiliness, craft, and subtlety of the devil; all the spite, malice, and opposition of wicked men; the ingratitude, desertion, and treachery of friends; the hate and

vindictiveness of enemies; that the most painful, disgraceful, and revolting death, attended with cruel scourgings and mockings, would have to be His; that He would have to die as man, being beaten down, insulted, and oppressed, dies; He would have to give His human body to the grave, and His human soul to the place of departed spirits; that He should on the third day rise again; and after forty days ascend up to heaven, and take His seat on the throne of the highest honour and glory there at God's right hand; but that, even there, He was to take man under His protection, intercede for them for ever, send down, in conjunction with the Father, the Holy Spirit; help, sustain, and bless men with His grace and sacraments, and carry on in heaven the mediatorial office he had begun on earth.

These were the conditions, as we can learn from Holy Scripture, that God the Father demanded; and in return He engaged to look upon man as His children in Christ; they should be no more enemies; their human nature should be dignified, purified, and strengthened; He would put His laws into their hearts, and write them in their minds, and their sins and iniquities He would remember no more.

This covenant gives us a very high idea of God's love to mankind; if we had any doubt about the desire of the Almighty to receive our service and obedience, a consideration of the object and terms of

this covenant ought to remove it all. God the Father wishes man to be reconciled; God the Son is willing to undergo anything to accomplish that reconciliation. We might at first sight in anxiety ask: Will there be any difficulty in our Lord Jesus Christ carrying out His part of it? Is there any chance of His failing? If, as the angels did, we could have stood by and looked at each step of it being gone through, what would have been from time to time our feelings? Our Lord is taking flesh, and is being born a helpless human babe. The first part is accomplished. Heaven has been left; our Lord is on earth, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. Men may behold the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Look what difficulties immediately beset Him. Herod the king is roused against Him. The child is obliged to be carried off into Egypt by night, and is, after some time, brought back, only to be relegated into the ill-reputed, half-heathenish parts of Galilee and Nazareth. How He lived there during those years of infancy, childhood, boyhood, and early manhood, as He grew in favour with God and man, we know not; but with what eyes must the angels have watched Him, they who knew Him, who He was, the Holy One of God! What was afterwards dangerous in the grown-up man, tending to subvert the people, sufficient to make the rulers of the Jews tremble lest the Romans should come and take away their place and

nation, was then attractive, charming, to be loved and admired in the young, harmless, beautiful, intelligent boy of twelve. But angels would know that these very doctors of the law, who were now admiring His understanding and answers, would be the very men who in twenty years to come would be seeking His life, and covenanting with a treacherous disciple to get Him into their hands without uproar. While angels looked on as He grew up, and watched the development of things, His mother pondered over what she knew of His origin, and wondered how all these things would end. At last the Baptist's voice, like a bugle-call in a mountain glen, drew Him from His seclusion. The time had come when His work, His Father's business, should be begun. He went up and was baptized of John in Jordan. He afterwards was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the Devil. Now His trials begin. Suppose we could follow Him all through life, as each fresh scene presented itself; and see Him, as He faithfully and obediently carries out His part of the covenant, how sad we should be at witnessing the amount of contradiction that He meets with; how concerned we should be to see that the life, which ought to be in all the pageant of a monarch's march, amidst grateful and adoring crowds, is but fraught with poverty, privation, indignities, insults, and contumely; how grieved we should be to see Him having

to bow His head in suffering; how overpowered we should be, as we saw Judas betraying Him to the chief priests and rulers; with what anxious hearts we should follow Him into Pilate's judgment-hall; and how we should realise that things were approaching their accomplishment, as we heard Him condemned to be lifted up on high on the cross; and then we should have to witness the scourging, the mocking of the soldiers, the crowning with thorns, the piercing His hands as He is nailed to the cross, the hiding of His Father's face, His agonising cry as the sins of the whole world now lay upon Him. The work He had come to do was certainly being carried out to the bitter end. If we had thought before of the possibility of failure, we should now think that the time of doubt and uncertainty was past, the time of suffering too nearly over; and then, when the cry went forth of "It is finished," and He bowed the head and gave up the ghost, though we might smite upon our breasts and stand aghast at such indignities being undergone by the Son of God, we should yet probably feel a touch of relief, inasmuch as the worst was now over; the hours of the grave would soon pass; Easter-morn would soon be here; and then, after the forty days, as soon as He had ascended up to heaven, it would be our turn to act. A change had come over our relationship to God. Christ had so far fulfilled His part of the covenant, and we were now with Him.

We were sons of God; the real sacrifice for sin had now been made; we were reconciled; Christ had obeyed God's law for us; justice no longer opposed mercy; we were children of God both by adoption and redemption. Christ was now our Mediator in heaven, ready to offer up our prayers there, anxious and willing to act as our Intercessor, looking for us to take advantage of the means of grace and sacraments He had left us, hoping that we will follow His example and walk in His steps, and reminding us that He has sent down the Holy Spirit to regenerate, renew, and sanctify those whom the Father has given Him.

The proper thing, therefore, I am sure, for us to be reminded of to-day is the fidelity, and unshrinking devotion and obedience, which our blessed Lord is showing, in fulfilling His part of the covenant. He is dying on the cross, after having lived a most anxious, painful, and distressful life. The most arduous part of the fulfilment of the covenant on His side is over. He will now wish to see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied; He will now be engaged with His office of Mediator in heaven. God's laws will now, in consequence, be put into our hearts and written in our minds—*that* is according to the stipulation. But what will be our duty? Our lives must act those laws. We must draw near to God in full *assurance* of faith, knowing that we can please Him;

neglecting nothing to show our Saviour how grateful we are to Him that He consented to undergo so much for man, and hoping that in God's good time we shall be allowed to go and pay Him that adoration in heaven, which we hope will, when it comes from the vast assembly of the redeemed in all generations, compensate Him somewhat for all He suffered while on earth.

We must live in expectation of that, not thinking ourselves weak, powerless, unable to serve God; not feeling a sense of guilt and unworthiness; but joyful, hopeful, as men and women who have been redeemed; for the promises of the new covenant are—that God will put His laws in our hearts and write them in our minds, and our sins and iniquities remember no more.

Easter Morning.

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God."—Col. iii. 1.

We have an account in the Gospel histories of our blessed Lord going up into a mountain, and there, on the top of it, apart from all crowdings of men, away from all the noise and tumult of the world, out of sight and hearing of all disturbing influences of passion, of suffering, of complaining, of want, of disease, of death, assuming a most divine and angelic appearance; His face shone as the sun, His clothes were white as the light, two glorified human beings—Moses and Elias—in all the brightness and magnificence of heaven came and conversed with Him. That mountain top at that moment seemed like the entrance to heaven; so beautiful, so bright, so glorious, so peaceful was everything around and about. Three of our Lord's disciples were with Him, and, when they saw it all, they fell on their faces awestruck and overpowered. When Jesus roused them up, the brightness and glory all being gone, they began to wend their way down from the mountain, and soon

came to where the rest of the disciples were; and around them was a multitude questioning and disputing, with voices loud and contentious; in the midst was a poor youth, dumb, lunatic, foaming, gnashing with his teeth, writhing on the ground in dreadful agonising contortions. The father of the child was there present, his heart rent with distress, his cheeks flooded with tears, and himself looking in vain to all around for help and deliverance for his son.

What a contrast was here—between the top of that mountain and this assembly beneath. On the top were glory, brightness, peace, serenity; beneath pain and suffering in the youth, distress and anguish in the father, disputing, angry jangling and cavilling on the part of the scribes with Christ's baffled disciples.

How like the world is that assembly beneath the mountain. Let us look around us, and where do we not see pain, suffering, disease, want, quarrelling, strife, hatred, malice, spite? If we are not in pain and suffering ourselves, we yet have our hearts torn by seeing our friends, our dear ones, racked and tossed with it; if we are not ourselves quarrelling, yet our eyes and ears can seldom long escape being shocked at loud and angry voices, and fierce and spiteful countenances. The world is full of such things. How shall we put it? Suffering and want and evil

spoil the world; but yet, in the midst of it all, the sun bursts out on some spring morning, the storms and blasts of winter are hushed, as if they had never been, the buds are sprouting forth, the birds are singing, all things are active with life and movement; we turn to our homes, and our hearts are warm and tender with love and affection; even if we are in pain, something whispers hope, or we bend our heads in calmness, with patience and resignation; or, if some of our friends are afflicted, we see some beauty of soul peeping forth through their sufferings, and our hearts are touched, a sort of sunshine comes into our darkness, and it is not all gloom; we get glimpses of what is on the top of the mountain, a long way off, where Jesus was transfigured, and Moses and Elias came and talked with Him in all the brightness of heaven.

All this enables us to draw a distinction. We look at our present life, the world as it is around us, and we say to ourselves we can imagine a better world than this, and in that world that we can imagine there must be no sickness, no pain, no suffering, no oppression, no want, no poverty, no hunger, no stormy blasts of winter, no pinching cold, no scorching heat; we must be well ourselves and all must be well around us; all must be peace and gentleness too, there must be no quarrelling, no strife, no envy, no spite, no malice; there must be room for all, and plenty for all, and kindly feelings must abound

everywhere. And if we let our imaginations have full swing, we should want scope also for our affections; material too for our intellects to work upon; and we should not stop until we had God also near to all of us, that we may look up to Him with love, gratitude, and devotion.

Now is there a chance of such a world ever being realised? Holy Scripture talks of a new heaven and a new earth. It speaks of Adam being the first man of the old creation, and of Christ Jesus being the first of the new. As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive. The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain; but a time is looked for, when outside things will partake in the advantages that have already accrued to things inward. I, John, says the writer of the Revelation, saw a new heaven and a new earth, and a holy city was there for men to dwell in; and from the eyes of those who dwelt therein God was wiping away all tears, and into it should in no wise enter anything that defiled, or that worked abomination, or made a lie, but those which were written in the Lamb's book of life.

It is evident, therefore, that Scripture holds out to us a realisation of this new and perfect world, and all the best men, that have lived during the times of the Christian dispensation, have had their eyes fixed on it in hopeful and patient expectation. They have said there is in the world a vast amount of what is

wrong, there is physical evil, pain, and want; there is moral evil, the bad passions, lusts, spite, and wickedness of men. The world was not so created by God; sin and the Devil have ruined it; and Christ has come to redeem the world, to restore it, to make it again as it was, when it came forth from the hands of its Maker.

Adam began the first world, Christ begins the new. To master and overpower this sin and evil, the Son of God had to become a man, and pass through, and Himself experience all that was wretched and oppressive in it. He was to be spared nothing. All the bitterness that is in the world was looked upon as having been put into a cup, and He was to drink it to the very dregs; but, when He had gone through it all, He was to rise victorious from the grave, and, like the sun which, on a glorious spring morning, scatters all the dark shadows and gloom of night, and drives away, too, all the pinching, benumbing, deadening cold of winter, Christ rising from the tomb was to disperse the deadly and oppressive night of sin, and open up a new world of light and happiness. To-day is the anniversary of that rising from the dead. We have followed Christ in His incarnation, in His temptation, in His sufferings; we have seen Him in our mind's eye die for man. He now rises from the dead. This is all in faith. His life and resurrection *is an* emblem of man's career; weakness, suffering,

death; and then all pain and misery are over, and we rise to a joyful immortality.

It is an emblem in another way—weakness, sorrow, pain, gloom, despondency, a sense of sin; and then our sins are blotted out in Jesus Christ, and we rise to newness of life, we partake of Christ's resurrection; old sins and weaknesses have been buried with Christ; we are new men, with risen hearts, risen wills and affections, new hopes, fresh powers.

But all this is by faith; it is inward in the heart and in the spirit; it cannot be shown at once outwardly; but it is felt first by faith inwardly, and then it becomes manifest outwardly.

When Christ rose victorious from the tomb on the first Easter-morn, and all sin and misery were said to be removed, and a new creation made its appearance, what we should have liked would have been, of course, that the old world should have been blotted out, and a new world put at once in its place. This did not actually happen; we have to exercise our faith. The Christian religion, as it stands among us, is the proof that a vast change was effected that very first Easter-morn in the spiritual world. Christ rose from the dead, and though sin and misery, disease and want, and sorrow and death, did not immediately disappear, yet a way from earth to heaven is opened, and men are being gradually led along it.

Christ is risen, and those that are Christ's have

risen with Him, have set themselves above this world, have withdrawn themselves by His power from sin, and the works of darkness, and the Devil. If sin meets them, they pray for God's grace to resist it and put it from them; if sorrow, pain, or misery afflicts them, they look upon themselves as in the hands of a merciful Saviour, and they give themselves up to Him with patience and resignation; and, even in the face of that last enemy, Death, they fear no evil; for the sting of death is sin, and that has been removed for them by Christ.

Faith, therefore, acting inwardly, assuring them that Christ has risen, and that in one sense, even in this world, they are risen with Him, robs pain, sickness, want, and death, of their power, and so really makes them disappear; and thus there is created for men a new heavens and a new earth.

To prove that this way of looking at things would not be without material result, I would only beg you to reflect what would soon be even the material condition of the world, if all the congregations who were met this morning to celebrate Christ's resurrection were really risen with Christ in spirit; they would then, as the Apostle says, "be seeking those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." If all the people now assembled in all the places of worship, even in this kingdom, were risen with Christ, a great deal of misery would be

banished from the world; and, if that number were continually and rapidly increasing, we might confidently say that in a few years most of the misery, want, sorrow, and crying, that now afflict the world would have disappeared. We should have, certainly, until the number of God's elect was made up, sickness and death; but Christ's presence cheers a man up, and makes all his bed in his sickness; and to one who was risen with Christ in this world, death must certainly lose its terrors; for the righteous have hope in their death—not only for themselves, but also for their friends, that they can all one day be reunited in Christ. The resurrection, therefore, would soon be visible in that case as a material fact. Do we disbelieve that such a state of things could be brought about in the world, even with no more than a faith in Christ? We cannot disbelieve it—nay, it forms the subject of most men's hopes; dim, distant hopes, not perhaps looking as likely to be soon realised; perhaps rather of wishes—of prayers certainly; for we all pray, and that, too, every day, that Christ's kingdom may come; and if it did, there would be, if not a new heavens and a new earth, at least new men on the earth, with new hearts, new resolves, new desires; old things would in truth have passed away, all things would become new, and all through Christ and His resurrection.

My brethren, as a preparation for this coming of

the kingdom of Christ for which we pray, may we rise in heart with Christ; and, if we do, we shall seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God; and, if all Christians did that, even though there were not a new earth, there would be in the present one but little to be deplored, but little needing alteration.

First Sunday after Easter.

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"—1 JOHN v. 4, 5.

WHEN we read of John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judæa, and calling upon his hearers to repent and bring forth fruit meet for repentance, we feel curious to learn of what character his hearers were; for we should then know to whom it was considered that repentance appropriately belongs.

Our first idea of repentance is, that it is a change of mind; and, as one change of mind may be followed by another, we are apt to doubt a repentance that is not assured by a long season of probation.

In worldly matters people are suspicious of the stedfastness of those who have at any time changed their views or conduct. It is natural to doubt the strength of principles, which are not the result of slow growth, and gradual development. But in religious matters, when we hear of repentance, we at once think of something sudden, as opposed to what is the result of long and mature deliberation; for

we know that conscience can be the subject of sudden prickings or awakenings; the Word of God is, we read, sharper than any two-edged sword; and we picture a quick, sudden, stroke or piercing.

We therefore naturally apply repentance to the sudden conversion of heinous sinners. They have been suddenly pricked to the heart, or their inward nature has been divided by the quick stroke of some sword of God, and their mind has been changed; but a little further experience suggests to us that there is also a repentance which is, what we should call, sorrow for shortcomings and imperfections, and a resolution, with God's grace, to avoid, if possible, such weaknesses for the future. The jailor of Philippi may be an example of the one; St. Paul himself of the other.

Repentance, however, properly so called, belongs more appropriately to heinous sinners, or, at any rate, to men who have been living without God in the world, following their own inclinations, uninfluenced by a thought of a Governor of the world, or of a Creator to whom they were responsible. And it has the character of something sudden, whose genuineness or stability ought to be tried or proved. How long would it be necessary that a man's new principles should be tried, before an outsider would feel confidence in the reality of his change of views and conduct? Would a day, a week, a month, or six months, be sufficient?

A father might very naturally be supposed to say to his son, who said that he repented, Continue in your new views stedfastly for a month, and, at the end of the month, if I find you still in the same mind, I will trust you, and accept you in your new character. Or he might put it a little stronger, You have grieved and vexed me so much, that I do not feel justified in again receiving you into my favour, simply because you say you are sorry and have changed your mind. Leave your present associations; withdraw yourself from all the whirl of dissipation in which you have been revelling; go into retirement; show that you are sorry, and that there is no sacrifice you would not submit to, to make amends and atonement; let that state last a month or six weeks; and, if I see that your repentance is genuine and your change of views lasting, I will then pardon you and receive you unreservedly into my former favour and confidence.

Repentance, then, is a sudden change imported into unbecoming conduct. Then there follows a season wherein are mixed penitence and probation; that again is followed by free pardon and acceptance; and then comes the new life, free, untrammelled by reproaches or reflections upon what is past—a life to be supported, directed, illumined.

The man who can continue stedfast in this new life must have his mind pervaded by such and such

principles, and himself be prepared for difficulties. God's commandments, however, it is said, are not grievous; he must be determined, and remember what his new motto is, and the victory will be his.

Our Church, on this first Sunday after Easter, speaks in a somewhat similar manner. If we have not all been heinous sinners, we are all conscious of many shortcomings and imperfections. We have all needed some kind of repentance—if not a total change of mind, at least a more decided bias or inclination in our minds. It would be impossible for even the best of us to write too bitter things against himself, so pure is the Almighty, so infinite His condescension and love, so impure and ungrateful are we. We consider that we are at all times subjects of God's grace. There is not a day, not a moment perhaps, when we do not feel that the voice of God is speaking to us saying, "My son, give Me thine heart." But at certain seasons, like Advent or the beginning of Lent, our Church has so arranged her services that all her children shall be summoned by a cry, like that of John the Baptist in old time, "Repent, the time is pressing! bring forth, too, fruit meet for repentance." If we, with God's grace, incline our hearts and attend to the prickings of conscience, and allow the strokes of God's Word to reach our souls, we become, at the calling of our Church's services, subjects of a true and unfeigned change of mind; but we might well be ex-

pected to show our sorrow—to prove the stability of our newly-acquired ideas and resolutions. Our Church gives her children a period of forty days—partly of discipline, partly of trial,—and then we are promised that, if we have continued firm and stedfast until Easter-morn, we shall consider ourselves to have risen with our Master, Christ, to newness of life; a new principle is then dominant in our hearts — we have been born of God. But is all danger removed? Have we now reached a point where there will be no more temptations and difficulties? Alas, no! Our Church acknowledges, and indeed, reminds us that there is the world to encounter, no less real than before. But we are now born of God, and whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and the weapon by which we can overcome the world and gain the victory is Faith.

People often wonder what is meant in Scripture by the world. If we consider that Faith is the weapon by which it can be overcome, we shall soon see that the world means sense, things present, visible—such as we can see, and touch, and taste, and hear; what we call realities. People are often distressed at seeing it written, "Love not the world, neither the things of the world," and anxiously ask, Where is the danger? In what consists the evil? If, when in presence of anything, we would willingly ask, And is this a part of the world?—let us arm ourselves with the weapon

of Faith; and if Faith finds before itself its natural enemy, let us be sure that what lies before us is the world. It comes in many forms, present self-indulgence being its main characteristic. When disposed to give way to some pressing inclination, let us ask ourselves, If I had Faith, is what I am now being tempted to do the course I should pursue? Faith says, God is, and is, too, a faithful rewarder. Faith says, The things which are seen are temporal; the things eternal are the things not seen as yet. A very able statesman and philosopher—one who had seen many men and many cities, and had given his heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning most of the things done under heaven, said, looking at the matter with the cold eyes of reason, That it was a wonder to him that religion ever gained the victory over the world, so powerful was the influence of sight and sense.

How wise, then, is our Church in offering to the young Christian, newly risen with Christ, newly born of God, the weapon of Faith—that power by which can be realised the future and the invisible. The world will meet us, and its whole strength lies in its being present and visible. Faith makes God and the other world present and visible, and this world fades before eternity.

The Apostle, whose words our text is, describes Faith in further and more explicit terms. Faith consists, he says, in believing that Jesus is the Son of

God; Jesus, who came and took our nature upon Him, and died that He might reconcile the Father to us, was the Son of God. The weaknesses and impurities of our nature are removed, we receive of Christ's own strength, and He gives us the power of living unto God, and of pleasing Him as sons of God. A faith then, that this Jesus was the son of God, gives us a power not our own. He was bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and therefore could leave us an example such as we might follow, even though it might be at a distance. Is the example impossible to follow, even so at a distance? He leaves us not to our own strength; He sends down His Holy Spirit to invigorate us, to renew our failing nature, to bring His life and word to our remembrance; He has left us His sacraments, an unfailing source of grace. If Faith makes us realise all this, and assures us that this Being who does so much for us is the Son of God, shall we not acknowledge that there is so communicated to human nature a strength, which might well be expected to indeed overcome the world?

Of course it would be very much to be wished that this strength, once communicated, were ever active, never failing. But our human nature is not renewed once and for ever—petrified and solidified into the firmness and unimpressionability of the granite; it still remains, as long as we are in this world, human nature; and St. Paul, seeing how firm it was in one

sense and yet how weak in another, said, He had within him two natures, two laws, two principles; the flesh is for ever lusting against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, so that we can—none of us—do the things that we would. But it is when we are weak that then we are strong, through the spirit of Christ that dwelleth in us.

And it is here that we may thank God and admire, when we meet with instances of a weak human being, in the midst of a world which touches him on all sides, at one time distracting him, at another time appealing to his passions and tempers, at another time alluring and enchanting him, enabled by Faith to pass by all these things, being in the world but not of it, caring little for what meets him here, in anticipation of what cannot in any sense be his, till he have put off this yoke of flesh.

The Faith that can do that is a heavenly gift. It is not a mere head belief in the doctrines of the Gospel, but it is a feeling of the heart—the gift of God's Holy Spirit. It is not as if one man needed that gift and not another, nor as if the world pressed upon some more closely than upon others. The world is to every man his daily life, and, in that life from day to day, all higher and eternal objects will be disregarded and forgotten, unless, by the gift of God's Holy Spirit, we have Faith to enable us to live *for eternity* amid the things of time, and to walk amid

a world of sight and sense, as seeing that which is invisible.

This gift of Faith, therefore, is sufficient for all our needs. It does not harden our natures into stone, the world can still impress us; but there is generated at each impression, every day and every moment, grace, which rising upwards from our hearts like a vapour, acts as a coating to our souls, and prevents the world from operating upon us. We have risen with Christ, we have been born of God, we have overcome the world, but the contest renews itself daily, and what we have already done must be done again and again. And in our continued conflict with the world we have to go to the grace of God for fresh strength at every turn, like the fabled giant of old, who felt his worn-out strength renewed, as each time he touched his mother earth.

We may feel a little disheartened at the unceasing nature of the conflict; but the strength infused into us is omnipotent. Jesus is the Son of God, and through Him we become sons of God; for they who believe on Him, says the Scripture, are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

We must not expect to escape the difficulties, that such a conflict, as that with the world, necessarily entails on us; it is enough for us, if at the last we are conquerors. The Captain of our Salvation has

shown us the way wherein we should walk, the sort of life we might expect. No freedom from agony, no exemption from the darkness and gloom of uncertainty. But hope shines bright beneath all. He prepares and cheers us thus: "In the world ye shall have tribulation;" if the world has been against Me it will also be against you; "but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world;" and, if I have overcome it, ye, if ye believe in Me, may overcome it also.

Second Sunday after Easter.

"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps." —1 Peter ii. 21.

We read in the Gospels that our blessed Lord restored a poor man, possessed with devils, to his right mind. The poor man, now healed, sat at the feet of Jesus, and wished never to leave Him. He begged our Lord to be allowed to accompany Him, whithersoever He went. That was impossible, undesirable—we know not what; at any rate Jesus told him to return to his own home, where he would have to live his own life. But yet our Lord's parting words with him contain something like a wish, a hope that he would not forget what had been done for him, but live a life of watchfulness and self-restraint, not far different from what would have been his, if he had been allowed to follow Jesus, and be with Him in person from day to day.

Let us picture such a man returning to his own home. At first how vivid would be his remembrance of Christ! With what feelings of lively gratitude

would he relate all that had been done for him—his deliverer's words, his deliverer's looks! During the first week, he would have told the tale fifty times over; and the interest and curiosity of his friends and neighbours would be like fuel to his flame of grateful remembrance. The next week, the tale might, from repetition, lose much of its freshness and interest. As time further went on, the man, settling down to the pursuits of ordinary life, would have to be content with simply trying to go over in his own mind all that had happened to him, and acting as his great deliverer had, at parting, exhorted him to do. In time, perhaps, all excitement would have worn away, the impetus given him would have spent itself, and he would have to rely mainly on his own strength of character. If we were near him, how pleased we should be to see him acting, as if he were not forgetting what had been done for him; if we were not subject to be depressed in the same manner as he was, how ready should we be to cheer him up, when we saw his spirits flag under the monotony of daily life; if we knew all the circumstances of the case, how much help might we give him in talking with him of Jesus's command that he should go to his own house, and there show forth all that had been done for him! But we should not be unwilling to acknowledge that it was very possible that he would *at last* find his new life very trying; and that many

a strong man might easily fall back again to the old life of the tombs, from which he had been so suddenly and wonderfully rescued.

My brethren, I think we all know that our difficulty lies not so much in getting warm religious feelings kindled in our hearts, as in making those feelings last and display themselves in our life and conduct.

There is much about Easter, which gives it the character of a turning-point in our lives. There is in our Lent services something so solemn and touching, that, if we are men and women of any feeling and reflection, we cannot help reviewing our condition in the sight of God more closely than we have, perhaps, for many months done; and it may not be impossible that with God's grace, while impressed with a sense of our shortcomings and unworthiness, we may have resolved with God's help to lead better and holier lives for the future. During Lent that sorrow and humiliation may have deepened into gloom and oppressiveness; but at Easter, so joyous and full of a feeling of deliverance is the note then struck, that it is no exaggeration to say that we can easily believe that spiritually we have risen with Christ to newness of life and being. But alas! what are we to do with ourselves afterwards?

Now it seems to me that the style of our services after Easter bears marks of a fear lest the good effects of Easter be fleeting and transient.

We have been with Christ in His temptation in the wilderness; we have followed Him to the garden of Gethsemane; we have been sad over His sufferings, His cross and passion; we have shut our eyes at the darkness that accompanied His most awful death; we have, with the women, watched Him lying in the tomb; we have cried out with joyful hearts, as they did, on Easter morn, He is risen! But now, when we should like to follow Him farther, and busy ourselves about His person, the number of events seems to diminish. He is now, even at this short distance from His resurrection, scarcely more of this earth; and we are sent to our homes to think over all that has happened, and to live in quiet and alone the life we should have liked to have lived with him. The danger of giving way under the monotony of our daily life is great; we need being constantly kept up to the mark of Easter; it is now a case of quiet patient living, from day to day, the life of Christ. And what shall keep us up to the high and elevated pitch of Eastertide? Our Church in her services is not unmindful of our difficulties. Last Sunday, we were asked to pray that, now that we were risen with Christ, we might so put away the leaven of malice and wickedness, that we might always serve God in pureness of living and truth; and we were reminded that, if we are born of God, we can overcome the *world;* and the principle by which the victory is

gained is Faith. To-day, we are asked to pray that, as the Almighty has given His "only Son to be unto us both a sacrifice for sin, and also an ensample of godly life," "we may always most thankfully receive that inestimable benefit of His death, and also daily endeavour ourselves to follow the blessed steps of His most holy life."

While, therefore, thankfully looking upon ourselves as being delivered by Christ from being possessed by the evil spirit of sin, we must not forget that the best and perhaps the only way, in which we can show forth the great things that have been done for us, is by our lives. There is no attempt at concealing the difficulties that beset our path. It is much easier to feel religion than to live it; but come down we must from emotion to practice. Indeed the world is so full of action, that it is by living, not by thinking, that we have to show that we are Christ's; nay more, the world is so full of trials and provocations, that we have no choice left us; we are not allowed to rest. But we have our Lord's example before us by which to guide our steps. How faint or how clear that example will stand out to us will depend upon ourselves. Innocence of life, patience under unjust treatment, were the distinguishing features of His life; and so should they be of ours. Hereunto, says the Scripture, are we called, that we should follow His steps; He "did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth; when He was reviled, He

reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not."

It seems, therefore, as if we were exhorted to put the case to ourselves in this way: We have, after the solemnity of Lent and the joy of Easter, retired, as it were, to our homes and to the ordinary routine of daily life; if our religion is now left to itself, if it is confined to thoughts and remembrances, it will possibly languish and fade; the world, too, with its trials and provocations will do its best to wipe it clean away. What, therefore, a Christian is called upon to do, what, too, will best keep his religion fresh and clear in its impression, is to show that he remembers his Master, Christ, by the way in which he meets the world with its trials and provocations.

No man can forget Christ, or fall away from the high tone of his Christian profession, who, expressly and of set purpose, tries with God's grace to meet the trials, that each day brings him, in the spirit and after the example of his Master, Christ. Innocence of life he puts forth on all occasions, because he remembers how supremely innocent his great Exemplar was; he bends his head in patience, returning good for evil, to try and follow after, even though at a distance out of sight, the exemplary, great, condescending patience of Him who, though in the form of God, took upon Him the form of one who had to be obedient to everything, even the death on the cross. Conse-

quently, if a man has made a certain principle—the love and example of Christ—his guide in life, it may be considered that, in acting according to that principle, he must necessarily remember Christ. If I every day do an act, strange and new and different from my old habits, for the sake of an absent or departed friend, I am naturally reminded of that friend by what I do. And, oh, how worthy is our Lord Jesus Christ to be remembered! How great was His love and kindness to us! The Apostle insists upon it. It ought to be nothing hard for us to follow His example, and bear for His sake any sufferings, difficulties, provocations. He bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live no longer therein.

We shall not have to go far in life without meeting with things hard for flesh and blood to bear and do. Some will come in the shape of worries and vexations, others in the shape of seductions and enticements; our natural inclinations may suggest a course of action so strongly, that it will, perhaps, be a great and painful effort to deny ourselves. To yield would be like letting ourselves down a gentle easy slope; to resist, like mounting an arduous and painful ascent. Thus it is said that the path of sin is easy, natural; that of holiness difficult—only to be pursued by the renewed man strong in Christ. What did our Champion and Redeemer do? He suffered

for us, submitted for our sakes to all that was disagreeable, painful, humiliating; leaving us an example that we should follow His steps. To follow in His steps is like following after Him in love and reverence. And how easy would be the most arduous thing with Him before beckoning to and approving us!

What a mighty constraining principle is here! A principle that can overcome the world, a principle that realises things not seen, a principle that can enable us to live in the dull monotony of our common life, as if we were continually under the immediate eye and in the visible presence of Christ, doing what we do, to approve ourselves to Him! That principle is Faith—the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen!

My brethren, may it be the spring and motive power of all we do; and may it be sufficiently strong to help us to live the life of Christ, when all the emotion of Lent or Easter-time must, in the monotony of daily life, have passed away!

Third Sunday after Easter.

"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." —1 PETER ii. 11, 12.

THERE is an idea very common in the world, but perhaps more generally entertained by irreligious than by religious people, that, when once a man has been what the world calls converted, the practice of religion is an easy thing—indeed, in a certain sense, natural. The world is inclined to believe in the impossibility, or at least the improbability, of a falling from grace.

Such a belief is expressed in one way by the astonishment shown by one set of people at seeing a man, who has professed himself a Christian, not acting up to the high mark of his Christian profession, and in another way by the scorn of another set of people, who prefer to doubt whether the high profession has been anything but simulated and interested. In each case people find it difficult to accept that a true Christian can fall from grace.

We have only to be reminded of the prevalence of this belief, to take it for granted that the doctrine of Final Perseverance has been, from time to time, a subject of the hottest discussion.

It can easily be imagined that there are religious men, who, filled with the sternest and severest ideas of what a life with God is and ought to be, will refuse to believe *that* to be grace which is not irresistible and overpowering. But in the case of men who are not religious—men of the world—it will not take much to make them doubt of the reality of convictions that are not stedfast and permanent; they argue at once from experience that, as no one would go back from a belief that the earth moves to the old notion of its being stationary, so would no one go back from a belief in the reality and importance of religion to a disregard of it. But they forget that men, though believing in some scientific theory, such as that of health, have been known to disregard it, even to their own destruction. Knowledge does not therefore imply practice. "I approve the good, but follow the more baneful course," has been the confession of human nature for thousands of years; and, among religious people, we of the Church of England, though acknowledging the force of such texts as "He that is born of God sinneth not," and "If the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be *salted*?" yet look upon human nature as so weak

without being bad, so open to being attacked and repulsed without consenting to accept the conqueror, that we not only think it possible for a Christian to fall, but acknowledge that, in our opinion as a Church, a man, after he has fallen into sin, does not cease to be a Christian, but may, by the grace of God, arise again and amend his life.[1] We act up to the language of some of the old Fathers, and say that to a lapsed Christian, who repents and prays and exerts himself, God gives pardon, and restores his arms, so that he may fight again, strengthened for the conflict by the very sorrow for his sins. Is it possible, we as it were ask, that David should not have been allowed to repent after his sin in the matter of Uriah, or Peter to return, after he had denied his Lord, or the incestuous Corinthian, so repentant as to have St. Paul's love confirmed to him, to rise again and amend his life?

As long, therefore, as human nature is what it is —as long as our hearts are a battle-field, where the flesh striveth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, whatever our profession has been and is— our Church is willing to acknowledge that a Christian may fall, and that his falling is not incompatible with his being a Christian.

If we did not bear this in mind, we should never, I am sure, understand the style of our service of to-day.

[1] Art. XVI.

During Lent we humbled ourselves, repented truly of our former sins, underwent a sort of probation, too, that it might be seen whether our contrition was unfeigned, and we ourselves in earnest; and on Easter-morn we partook of all the joy of Christ's resurrection, and considered ourselves to have risen with Him to newness of life. We were Christians, begotten, as it were, anew in Christ, sons of God. There was no reservation, no mention of conditions; the pardon was looked upon as full, the grace unrestricted. If it were a society, into which we had been admitted, we should, I am sure, have been congratulated by the older members; and any familiar intercourse we might have with them would have reference to the advantages, happiness, or honour we had, by being admitted as members, been made partakers of. But not so is it here.

On the first Sunday after that we were risen with Christ, and had been admitted, as it were, anew into the fellowship of Christ's religion, a hope is expressed —only a hope—that now henceforth we will put away all malice and wickedness, and serve God in pureness of living and truth; we are reminded that we are now born of God, and whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world. All that sounds very much like expressing a fear lest, if we were left unwarned and unreminded, the opposite should be the case.

On the following Sunday we are told that God gave His Son to be both a sacrifice for sin and also an ensample of godly life. We must, therefore, daily endeavour ourselves to follow the blessed steps of His most holy life; and the walk through life will not be an easy one, it will be beset on all sides with injustice and wrong: but who suffered so much of that as our blessed Lord did? He, then, is our example, to show us that the way, in which He bore His sufferings, is how we must act in presence of all the vexations, that meet us in life.

There is an idea thrown out here that there was danger lest we should, if unwarned, act in a way not in accordance with our new position.

We shall, therefore, now, not be surprised at the style of our service of to-day. It follows in the wake of preceding Sundays, taking it for granted that, even though we have been admitted into the fellowship of Christ's religion, nevertheless, unreminded, we might possibly not eschew, as we should do, those things that are contrary to our profession. And the Epistle begins in a tone of the deepest earnestness and entreaty—"Dearly beloved, I beseech you." There is nothing here to make us suppose that we are alienating ourselves from Christian sympathy; we are still, tottering as we are, looked upon as being elect, beloved, dearly beloved. "I beseech you," the Epistle runs, speaking as if the matter depended upon

us ourselves, as if it said, Grace is with you; you have but to work with that grace, and you will be able to do what is required of you; you can do it, if you choose, and, I beseech you, do it. And what is it that we are besought to do? "Abstain from fleshly lusts." We might have thought that what we were going to be besought to do would be a perfecting holiness in the fear of God: but no; it was abstaining from what would be very ruin—from what would take captive, enslave, and degrade our very souls. These fleshly lusts are an army at large, marching through the land up towards the chief fortress, the capital of our hearts, ravaging all before them, burning, uptearing, laying waste, and disfiguring every inch of ground in their path. There is nothing that makes a man so selfish, so forgetful of honour, family ties, respect, duty, reverence—nothing which so thoroughly takes away all beauty of soul, as living to flesh and sense, widen or narrow the term as we please.

Are we Christians? then we are besought in terms of the most affectionate solicitude to abstain from fleshly lusts, for they war against the soul. We might well exclaim, How could we be, or ever have been, Christians, if we did not so abstain? This portion of Scripture does not say that, but it beseeches us in love to abstain from them. It intimates that the things of sense are at the bottom of all alienation from God. Taking a wide view of the matter, it reasons that, if a

man goes in for the world, the things of sense, like an army of ants or locusts, will swarm in on all sides up the territory of his heart, and every fresh and bright and blooming thing will be devoured up. Go through the world, then, as if not of it; live in it like strangers, as pilgrims merely passing through it, with eyes and heart intent on the shrine which is the end of your pilgrimage — heaven, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. But remember, if you are not of the world, the world will not understand you, and what it does not understand, it maligns. How far its malignity will go will depend upon the current ideas of the time; whatever cruelty it dare practise, it will inflict; whatever slander it can hope to find credence for, it will utter. If, as Archbishop Leighton says, evil-speaking be the hissing of the serpent's seed, it will be directed most particularly against the seed of the woman—those who are one with Jesus Christ. But that is no reason why you should join the world; rather have patience, and you will convince the world of its injustice. Let the style of your conduct, among those who know not Christ, be honest, fair, holy, blameless, without spot, or stain, or wrinkle, or any such thing, full of beauty and loveliness; and in no case deviate from it, and at last the world will be won. For the world, beholding your patience, meekness, charity, unswerving integrity, uprightness, purity of life, moderation, returning good for evil,

doing unto others as you would have others do to you, will glorify God who has given such power unto men. And thus, though they are not prepared to embrace Christianity themselves, they will yet acknowledge that it is the power of God unto salvation—the only power that can really leaven the world, and save it from itself.

And is not this the way in which God has always worked, using things that are lightly esteemed to confound the proud and mighty? In old times it was the Christian slave in the heathen household, whose patience and faith convinced his unbelieving master. Now-a-days, they are the poor, the miserable, the sick, the bedridden, the afflicted, whose patience, and Christian meekness and resignation first astonish and confound, then instruct, and at last convince and convert the rich, the gay, the strong, and the prosperous.

But our Epistle has now forgotten that it had been addressing and admonishing weak and unstable Christians; it pictures us all as having risen to such heights of perfection, that we are a "light to the world, a salt for the earth." Yes; the step is not far from being blessed ourselves to becoming also a blessing to others. God's treasure is in earthen vessels, liable to crack, break, overturn; but, as long as they are carried upright, and remain uncracked, unbroken, they hold the treasure as perfectly and as uncon-

taminated, as if they were of the purest and strongest metal.

And so the possibility of our falling does not prove that we have not the grace of God; but our having the grace of God,—our having risen with Christ to newness of life, is a reason why we should strive with all diligence to make our calling and election sure. Congratulating ourselves that we are saved, or deploring that we are without God's grace, cast off by Him, can only be fit for the day of judgment. In this world the only suitable language, in which we and all mankind can be addressed, is that of admonition. While the day of grace lasts, we may well be exhorted not to harden our hearts—to take heed lest we fall —not to cast away the hope of the recompense of our reward—to hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.

Our Church, looking upon all her children as recipients of God's grace, teaches us to pray that we may ever remain in the number of God's faithful and elect children;—that God will give us His grace, that so we may continue in that grace unto our life's end;—and that, even at our last hour, we shall not be suffered, for any pains of death, to fall from Him.

While, therefore, it is possible—and indeed to be feared—that we may fall, we may at the same time be preserved: and, in view of that swaying hither and thither, though we are Christians,—risen with

Christ; though we have only just passed that bright and glorious Easter morn, when we were supposed to have put away the leaven of malice and wickedness, and were received, as it were, anew into the fellowship of God's elect; yet for all that, our Church thinks —better than any confident congratulation, better than any assuming of her children's indefectibility—her words might be, "Dearly beloved, we beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation honest among the men of this world: that, whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may, by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day when those good works are recognised."

Fourth Sunday after Easter.

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights, with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning. Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures."—JAMES i. 17, 18.

IF a son of any one of us had been living so badly in this country, that a new start and a new life, untrammelled with all the old associations here, were absolutely necessary for him; how is it likely that the last few weeks before his setting out would be passed both by him and by us? If he were a man of any feeling, and the necessity of a departure were as keenly felt by him as by us his parents, it is probable that all the time that could be spared from active material preparation would be passed sadly, thoughtfully, not without much humiliation and repentance for the past, not without some impatience to bid adieu at once to all that reminded him of his old follies, and to begin immediately the life, he was looking forward to with so much hope and confidence. If he were a frank, open-hearted man, and all reference to his past life not strictly shunned and

tabooed, comparisons would be made between the way in which he had fallen here, and the way in which he was determined not to fall there; we should hear of vows and resolutions; the difficulties of the future would not be ignored; we might find ourselves kneeling down with him, and praying that all the vows and resolutions, now made, would not be forgotten in the new land, where ruin would now be doubly ruinous. At last the days of suspense and gloom end; the voyage is begun, our son is gone. We, the old people, remain at home, thinking of the good fresh start our son has made, reflecting after a while on the difficulties he will meet with; turning, however, our thoughts back with pleasure to the long conversations we have had with him, the vows and good resolutions he has made, the prayers we have both breathed together; and hoping that all was going well with him in the land of his adoption.

But as time goes on, we feel we should like to write to him, and help him with our letters. Of what kind shall they be? They might not be unlike these Epistles, which are appointed by our Church to be read on these early Sundays after Easter; for we are all like young people who have made a fresh start in life; we are at any rate young Christians, if not in reality, at least in feeling. Lent was a time, when, dissatisfied with our past lives, we might be said to have wished eagerly for a new

start under other skies and other influences. Easter morn broke; and we had risen again with Christ far away from old associations. As the weeks roll by, we might say, our friends at home, sitting quietly at their own firesides, unruffled and undisturbed by the fitful gales of youthful passion, send us letters; in other words, the old Fathers of our faith, far removed from all present temptation, or contact with the world, write us these Epistles.

The first reminds us that the world is about us, surrounding, besetting us. Though we have risen with Christ, and have begun a new life under other and fresh conditions, we must not expect nothing of our former trials. But we are born of God; and whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even a man's Faith.

I am sure that, if any one had a son beginning a new life in distant parts, he could not write to him in more effective and touching language than this. It is as much as to say, You have left the old world with its old dangers and associations; but there is a world still about you, strong, dangerous, still able to overpower you. You have begun a new life; but, unless you take long views of things, despising present gratifications, and believe in a government of the world by God, where no wickedness can ultimately triumph and come to good, you will fail there, as *you have* already done here.

A little time again passes, and another message comes to us. The world is seen to abound in injustice, trying to the temper, making vast calls upon our patience; and the Epistle for the Second Sunday after Easter begins with, "This is thankworthy, if a man, for conscience toward God, endure grief, suffering wrongfully." It is nothing to take deserved suffering patiently; but the credit lies in not losing faith, though wickedness revel in high places, and we get crushed beneath its feet.

Good words to any one—whether addressed to us Christians who have but lately risen with Christ to newness of life, or from us to some son of ours lately launched on a new life, where there will be much, which, if not endured patiently and with faith, will sour the temper, harden the heart, and make a man unguarded and reckless.

A little later, and the time comes for another letter. We are thinking of our son and of the difficulties by which he is surrounded; for the land where he is is not his home; he still belongs to us and to the old country; and we write to him exactly in the terms of the Epistle for the Third Sunday after Easter:—Dearly beloved, I beseech you as a stranger and pilgrim in that distant land,—as one some day about to return, if not to us alive, at least to the old family, "abstain from fleshly lusts which war against *the soul*;" conduct yourself well among the people

where you are, that, though they may have heard rumours of how you neglected things in the old world, they may acknowledge that the visitations of Providence are able to change anything.

My brethren, we must not forget that we ourselves, too, having risen with Christ and been born again, are equally or rather especially in the midst of a new life, where our only chance of continuing stedfast is remembering that, though in the world, we are but strangers and pilgrims in it, belonging to another, and that, too, one more abiding.

And now comes to-day's letter. We all have wills and affections, which are what is called unruly, and it is God alone who can order them. A man, when he is tempted, feeling himself worried with the difficulties presented to him by the necessity of withstanding temptation, is ready to blame anything—yes, even God Himself, for throwing evil in his way; just as a young man will often find fault with his parents, because it is his own duty to stand upright, as if they were the causers of all his difficulties. Our best friends wish for us nothing but what is good; it is our own hearts' unruliness that is the cause of all our trouble. And to-day's Epistle, to meet that view, reminds us that God is the author of nothing but of what is good and perfect. He is the Father of all that is bright and luminous in the universe, ever sending forth His rays, with no eclipse, no waning, no variation, no passing shadow even,

like night succeeding, and for a time displacing day. And then, further to prove to us how wrong we are to attribute any of our difficulties to God's arrangement of things, the Epistle reminds us that the real state of the case is the very reverse of all this. God has not only not caused us all our difficulties, but has even wished that we should be removed from all chance of defilement by being separated off, dedicated to Him, as a kind of firstfruits of all His creatures. Of His own will begat He us to be this. This is a far stronger expression than saying that we all belong to God, like the cattle on a thousand hills, or as the earth with the fulness thereof. We have been intentionally begotten anew, created a second time by God, in order that we might be a sort of firstfruits of all His creatures, dear, precious, His own, set apart for Him, chosen out before all others, not necessarily to their exclusion, but certainly to our own acceptance.

Here, now, we touch upon the doctrine of Election. God chose us of His own will, irrespective of our own merits, or of our own consent. Though the firstfruits are representative of the whole harvest, they are certainly culled out, chosen, favoured. He has begotten us to be His: and He is the Almighty Creator. What, then, is man that we can resist His will? If God, the Almighty, wishes and ordains us to be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures, holy, pure, righteous beyond others, such of course we should be, even in

spite of our own wills. The Apostle who wrote this Epistle, does not approach the subject on that side. He simply says, if God—or rather, since God has begotten us, intentionally, purposely and to be such, He must have loved us; and His willing us to be holy, pure, His, ought to have great influence with us in inclining our wills to act in accordance with His. The Apostle is evidently using the argument in the way of influence, acknowledging in that way that there is something in man that might oppose, but which might be influenced. It is a sort of influence that we see in continual operation in the world around us. If there is something which we ought to be, but are too inert to strive vigorously to attain, we are perhaps incited to rouse ourselves out of our inertness, when we think that one of our best friends is looking on, wishing us to become it. If we think our friend is actually putting his shoulder to the wheel, we can hardly stand by inert, when the affair is ours and for our good. But here, in our text, it is the Almighty who is represented as working with us, or indeed making the way plain before our face, and, inasmuch as He is the Sovereign Ruler of the universe, the Apostle thinks that there ought to be no obstacle in the way, but that the thing is as good as done.

Without therefore going farther than the Apostle does into the doctrine of Election, we may say to ourselves, We are expected to be influenced by the

consideration that God has of His own will begotten us to be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures; and, if we have allowed ourselves to be so, we shall never know what would have resulted, if we had refused to go with God's will, and had in fact, in our way and measure, resisted Him.

What, therefore, can be a greater means of grace, a greater incentive to our holding fast the profession of our faith without wavering, than this thought that God is willing us to stand fast, and He is Almighty? We can get some faint idea of the power of that influence by comparing it, or considering how great it is, in comparison with other influences that may be exerted over us, and that too with effect—even absent influences, working through our memories, acknowledged as powerful by even the most reckless of men. A little consideration will convince us that the Apostle was right in looking upon the idea of God's willing us to be of such and such a character, as in the highest degree constraining.

The object to be gained is well worthy of any pains employed. Would it not be much to be deplored, if, after having been launched on to the clear and deep waters of an unimpeded course, we should carelessly turn back to the mud, the sands and shallows, we had haply been dragged or steered through?

Our Church bears all this in mind; and her

admonitions on these Sundays after Easter are in accordance with what she thinks the varying circumstances of our case demand. To-day's admonition is that we love what God commands, and desire what He promises, that so our hearts may there alone unshakenly be fixed, where true joys are to be found. And if we continue firm and stedfast, we shall not be left unhelped and unblessed, for God favours us; and all His gifts are good and perfect; and what He begins He continues carrying on; with Him there is no change or variableness, no passing hiding of His face; but, with grace ever shining, He is ever invigorating, ever strengthening us. His favour is undoubted; for, unasked, of His own will, He has chosen and begotten us to be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures, and no fruits would be chosen, selected to be offered for the Lord of the harvest's particular use, unless they were choice and prime; and if God has chosen us, as prime and perfect—the best, such must we of necessity be. Wherefore, says the Apostle, we should act as such; we should be "swift to hear, slow to speak," in nothing weak, unsteady, imperfect, in all things working out the righteousness of God. We must beware how we give way to impatience, irritability, rashness: we must not allow evil to cling round and defile our hearts; God's Word, like a bud or shoot, is being engrafted there; and, if it is received with meekness, docility, yielding, readi-

ness,—and taken in, and allowed to remain there undisturbed, it will, sprouting forth from the stock of our hearts, grow up into fruit-bearing branches, and at last save our souls alive.

So full of good admonitions is the letter our forefathers have in their wisdom sent us to-day, fearing lest we should flag in our Christian course, knowing that the best-intentioned may fail, well aware how for a long time it must be line upon line and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; until at length we can come, in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto perfect men, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

Fifth Sunday after Easter.

"For, if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was."—JAMES i. 23, 24.

THE advice or admonition given in this Epistle of to-day is couched in such emphatic language, and sums up so curtly the whole range of religion, that we cannot help feeling that it is the last letter, so to speak, on that subject, which has now been for so long occupying our attention.

Next Sunday belongs to Ascension-day; then comes Whitsunday; afterwards we arrive at Trinity Sunday; all of which have their own special subjects, demanding special treatment. Here, then, in the Epistle of to-day, is the last piece of admonition, given with reference to Lent and Easter.

Hearing without doing is incontestably worthless. The Collect gives the note: God is the Lord, from whom all good things do come. His holy inspiration makes men think those things that are good. But alas! thinking good things is worthless, unless that

thinking be followed by acting and performing. The prayer, therefore, is that the Lord would grant to us, His servants, full of deep humility as we are, not only that we may, by His holy inspiration, think those things that are good, but also, by His merciful guiding, may perform them.

In nothing do we all need God's grace so much as in being helped to realise emotions. "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel," said an old man of one of his sons, who certainly, judged by outward appearances, was not the worst. Wax may be desirable to receive, but it is marble or iron that is required to retain or communicate. Nothing is more discouraging than to think that your friend, whom you have been urging to take such and such a course, has been all the while approving of every argument you have been bringing forward, but will, when you have left him, have forgotten all that you have been saying to him. There are men who can look at a beautiful landscape, admire it with all enthusiasm, but who will, when they have got back again to their homes, fail to recall any of the details, which they in their journey followed with so much unaffected pleasure. A man can read or hear read some passage from a book, express himself struck with each remark, idea, or incident, as it was recounted, and yet entirely fail to remember anything but the emotion or approval produced in him by the remark or description. Hear-

ing without remarking, so as to remember, is only too common.

In this Epistle a fear seems to be put forward that many of us will have followed the services of late, have listened to the admonitions that have been given by these little portions of Scripture read, have acknowledged in our hearts their truth, justness, and importance, and yet be not at all affected in our lives by them. What will have been the use of the approval, if the approval is not followed by action? "Be ye doers of the Word and not hearers only," it says, "deceiving your own selves. For, if any be a hearer of the Word and not a doer, he is like unto a man, beholding his natural face in a glass;" he sees the reflection of himself, acknowledges its correctness; but there it lies on the surface of the glass, something which he can neither seize nor hold, about to vanish and disappear, as soon as ever he withdraws his face: for the man, after beholding himself, goeth his way, and straightway has forgotten what manner of man he was.

Nothing can be a fitter emblem of fleeting impressions—the truth and correctness of the reflection; its unreality and want of substance—the hard glass or metal mirror, which offers a smooth surface for contact, but admits of no penetrating beneath. We have heard of marks in the sand used as emblems of transitory impressions, for the incoming tide will

soon wash them all away; but this of the reflection in the mirror, so true and yet so unreal, so clearly defined and accurately marked out, as long as the man stops and looks, but having no substance, disappearing without having left a single trace behind it, as soon as ever the man departs from before it, is far more exact and perfect. And the Apostle has taken this as a representation of a man who hears but does not: and he adds, Such men deceive themselves. Do we need any reminding that such a description may possibly be applicable to the way in which some of us not only hear God's Word, but treat His means of grace and the visitations of His providence? In nothing can a man so easily deceive himself as in thinking that what is vivid is real and substantial. Reflections in a mirror are as vivid, while they last, as the real objects themselves; and our prayers may prove to be but reflections in a mirror, which pass away, as soon as we have risen from our knees; our religious enthusiasm may be but as a reflection in a mirror; our resolutions no more than so; our Sabbaths can be but mere reflections, disappearing even before Monday morning shall have dawned; trials or deliverances, restorations or deaths of friends, sicknesses, recoveries, afflictions, or blessings, can be but reflections in a mirror, which we contemplate with touched hearts, while we are before them; but let us walk away from beholding them,

and they are nothing more than unreal shadows, without substance; which, when once past, we have clean lost sight of.

The people who drew up our services, anxiously concerned for our spiritual welfare, and fearing lest the good impressions we had been during Lent and at Easter-time receiving, might possibly, now that it would be no more "line upon line and precept upon precept," fade away and be lost, determined to choose for the last of these Sundays after Easter a portion of Scripture beginning with: "Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." But this portion of Scripture, after showing the transitoriness of hearing without doing, comparing it to shadows passing across a mirror, recommends stooping down towards and poring over patiently and persistently that perfect law which alone can guide our steps in life; but fearing lest this perfect law should be misunderstood to be the hard Mosaic Law, which, while forbidding murder, allowed murderous thoughts to rest and be cherished in the heart, it explains that this perfect law is the law of liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. In Christ we are not under the Law, but under grace. We are not reckoned righteous before God by works of the Law, nor does Christian virtue consist in obeying God's commands in their narrow letter; but let our hearts be supplied with a new vital principle—the spirit of

Christ; and Christ's righteousness is imputed to us in all its breadth and freedom; love to Him, His grace and spirit keep the issues of the heart; and we, in His strength, determine that no sin shall have dominion over us. We are free, but not unconstrained; unshackled, but not forgetful; and if a man act in the spirit of this perfect Christian law of liberty, being no thoughtless, forgetful, careless one, such a man shall be blessed, the Apostle says, in his deed—in all he does.

But, as it is possible for a man to delude himself into the idea that he is religious, by talking very loudly of religion and fancying that, in its domain at least, words are the same as deeds, the Apostle proceeds farther, and warns us that, if our convictions are deep and earnest, we shall not talk much about them. If we are pervaded with the spirit of our Master, Christ, we shall carry out in our conduct what the prophet said of Him, "He shall not strive nor cry, neither shall any one hear His voice in the streets." If we are truly religious, we shall use quiet, firm, sober expressions, free from all excitement of wrangling and passion; nay, even in our prayers we shall think that God is pleased not with the multitude of our words, but with the heart-felt earnestness and humility with which we can feel our need of mercy as sinners. Moreover, "God is in heaven," as the Preacher said, "and we on earth," therefore in praying to Him we should

make our words few. Yes; if any man among you, says the Apostle, seems to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue, this man deceives his own heart, and his religion is vain. If you want to know, he seems to say, what true religion consists in, I will tell you—"Religion pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world:" which, expressed in general terms, may be summed up as active charity and personal holiness. Is active charity then the highest kind of work? People have very different ideas of the relative value or importance of occupations. War and commerce, government and social ordering, are so manifestly and strikingly important, that we might, without thought or consideration, give them the first place among works necessary and beneficial; for it is evident at once to the lowest comprehension that, without those being assiduously cultivated, any nation would soon sink into the position of savages, and run a great risk of being enslaved, if not exterminated. But reflection, and indeed experience also, shows us that strength, power, wealth, and prosperity, unless founded upon justice, integrity, sympathy—in other words, upon charity, love, and holiness, being destitute of any real sound basis, soon totter and ultimately fall. In nations, not otherwise than in individuals, brute force is madness; pure intellect, unsanctified by higher considerations, nothing more than cunning.

In order, therefore, to gain a durability and the power of remaining fresh, untainted by putrefaction and incipient decay, all grandeur, magnificence, power, prosperity, and wealth, need a salt; and that salt—nay, the salt of the whole earth—is the spirit of the Gospel—love, sympathy, a doing unto others as we would have others do unto us, a walking as children of our Heavenly Father, a perfecting holiness in the fear of God. It may seem a long, slow, and tedious process—to work on at active love and charity, merely softening the hardships and lightening the burdens and afflictions of others; fostering feelings of holiness ourselves, hoping so to bring about anything like worldly greatness and prosperity; but we may be sure it is the safest and, indeed, the only means even to that end; while, if we are content to take shorter views of things, and to narrow our ideas, satisfied with a sort of every-day happiness and prosperity, we may easily learn that, with reference both to others and to ourselves, misery can be most certainly removed, and prosperity secured, by the simple means of active love or charity and personal holiness. Active charity removes present ills; personal holiness prevents their recurrence. While, therefore, the armed hand protects abroad, and the prudent head consults at home, religion—active charity and personal holiness—is the salt that seasons all, the power that preserves and renders *all* greatness possible.

And all this must not be mere emotion and no more—shadows and reflections passing across a looking glass—but be the result of quiet, steady, sober, patient bending down and poring over. My brethren, we must be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving our own selves, and, when we are doers, our deeds must consist not in passing before a mirror and letting a hasty representation of themselves be thrown there, which disappears as soon as made,—but in lasting and abiding realities. And if we do so, and what we abide and continue stedfast in, is in accordance with Christ's perfect law of liberty, it is promised that we shall be blessed in what we do.

Before, then, we quite leave this subject and the ideas that have been now for so many weeks brought before us, let us impress upon our minds that it is patient, steady, stedfast abiding, which we must in all cases cultivate. If we have had good feelings excited in us, those good feelings must be made to abide, and be shown in good living; if, during Lent, we have been moved to repentance, the genuineness of that repentance must be shown in stedfastly avoiding all sin in the future; and, if at Easter we have had an assurance given us that we have risen again with Christ to newness of life, we must patiently abide, seeking those things that are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

And our religion will be no slavish obedience to

rule and law, but will be the free and spontaneous action of a renewed nature.

Let us not merely seek the beginnings of such things, but untiringly, and from principle, with God's grace continue to pursue them. Do we wish a form of words to express what we should ever strive to follow after and realise?—then we may take for our motto, Holiness in the heart, and active charity in the life; or, as the Apostle defines it, Visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and keeping ourselves unspotted from the world.

Sunday after Ascension Day.[1]

"He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God."—MARK xvi. 19.

"This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven."—ACTS i. 11.

IT is probable that there are very few anxious Christian men, who, on reading the account of the last incidents of the life of their Master, and how at last He left this earth as a real living person, would not with longing hearts ask,—What has now become of Him?

Not unlike indeed must the feelings of all of us be to those of the disciples, before whose very eyes He was taken up, a cloud receiving Him out of their sight.

But such feelings are no doubt very material, savouring very much of the earth, and deserve admonition. For, while the disciples stood gazing up into heaven, and wondering to what material place their Master had now gone, we read, "Two men stood by them in white apparel, which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye here gazing up into heaven?"

[1] Partly translated, partly adapted from Schleiermacher.

They were rebuked for the earthliness of their thoughts. And we too, if we wonder whither Christ is gone, ought to be reminded that to the material sense of sight such things are invisible. While we are in the body, we must not expect any information, any insight. The Sacred Writers merely tell us that He went up; a cloud received Him out of mortal sight; and He now sits in heaven at the right hand of God.

But if we know not whither He is gone, we do know what He was, as He departed. Nothing can be clearer than that our Lord wished, during His last days on earth, after His resurrection, to prove to His disciples that He was the same being, as before His sufferings and death upon the cross. He showed them the marks in His hands and His side: He ate and drank with them, not otherwise than as He used to do. Wherever, therefore, He may be now, we may be confident that *there* He is, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, fully able and inclined to think, and feel, and pity, and indulge, as a sympathetic human being.

And, if we come to reflect upon it, a knowledge or a picturing of the place is unimportant. When we represent to ourselves heaven, as the place where the Most High dwelleth, we do not picture a real material place—a defined space or region; for we say, the stars, the sun, and indeed the whole celestial universe are *all* material, subject to the laws of time and space, just

as much as this globe is which we inhabit; still, though we know all that, we look up, not with our bodily eyes, but with the eye of faith, and say to our hearts,—The Most High is there—in heaven.

Thus we need not trouble ourselves with speculating where our ascended Lord is. Let us think who He was, before the worlds were; let us not forget that He came down to earth, and took upon Him the form and fashion of a man; and now, as a man, is exalted to the place of the highest honour and glory in the universe; and we may humbly but confidently expect that some of that glory of His may ultimately also be ours, when we go to be where He is.

St. Mark seems to forget the place in the position; for no sooner does he say that our Lord was received up into heaven, than he adds—and "sat down on the right hand of God." And, just as heaven is no material place, subject to the laws of time and space, so the right hand of God expresses all that is highest and supreme, in dignity and elevation. The New Testament writers are especially careful to inculcate that our blessed Lord is above all. The old fathers of the Church were not satisfied till they had drawn up a Creed, clearly stating that the Son was in His exaltation above every created being, above all the heavenly host, above all angels, equal to the Father as touching the Godhead, seated at His right hand,

subordinate only in His office. Angels are the servants of God, sent forth to do His will; they indeed adore before the eternal throne: but the Son of man is set at the right hand of God, "being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they."

The first reflection we might make is that this Being is our loving Lord: we fall down and adore in all humility, in all love; but there is another reflection which we cannot shut out, and that is, that Christ is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. That is the result of the Incarnation. Let all heaven be ransacked, and there is nothing greater, nothing more glorious than the human nature united to the divine; not the human nature by itself, but the human nature in Christ.

Let us not forget what Christ was, before He ascended up to heaven; let us remember what He is in heaven; and let us ask ourselves, Is there any connection between Him and us? We must be convinced that there is. This human nature, which is in each one of us, is capable of being elevated, in Christ and through Christ, to that compound essence, which shall one day be admitted to where Christ is in heaven. What—we might say to ourselves—if there is a germ inside our hearts so glorious, so worthy, does it not run a great risk of being smothered, stifled, and overpowered by all those miserable shortcomings and

imperfections, not to say downright sins, meannesses, and impure grovellings, that form the common atmosphere of human nature?

It is this very thing that has made the work of redemption a long and elaborate work. The Son of God not only took human flesh and gave a dignity to human nature; but He gave Himself a sacrifice and atonement for the sins and weaknesses of human nature. Yes; not only did He make atonement by His death for men's impurities, but now in heaven He pleads men's cause, makes intercession for them, and sits there the Mediator between God and man. What says St. Paul? Man's sins certainly call for condemnation, but who is the being who will pass the verdict? "It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

A vine-branch lying on the ground broken off, withered, dying, may not be much; but, if it is in the vine, partaking of the sap and power of the glorious vine-stock, whose fruit is the delight of nations, then the richness and fulness of the vine is its, and it is reckoned not by itself but by the stock from which it grows.

We are poor, weak, frail, sinful mortals of ourselves, but we may see the root of our life engrafted into Christ, and of His fulness we may be day by day receiving and grace for grace; and if so, when our

time comes to leave this world, our human nature in Christ, transplanted from this world, will be united to Him; and, though we do not exactly know what we shall then become, we do know this, that when we shall get near Him in the next world, even our bodies shall have been "made like unto His glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself."

While St. Mark, therefore, immediately turns to the position of our blessed Lord in heaven; St. Luke, who is the only other Evangelist who describes our Lord's departure from earth, turns from all picturing of His state in heaven to His coming again. Each of them, in his own way, leads our thoughts from the visible and material event to something higher.

It is as if the one said, "Think no more about His going up to heaven and disappearing from your bodily eyes, but think of the office He now holds in heaven." And as if the other said, "Stand not gazing up into heaven, but rather think of how He will one day come again, to judge the quick and the dead." Is not that too, a matter of the utmost importance to us? He will come again, visibly as He went up, and He will come to pass judgment upon the world, to separate things and persons that have been confused and mixed up together, to set right injustice, to show forth "the beauty of holiness," to expose and unmask and reveal sin and

unrighteousness in all their true hideousness;—to gather those that are His into the arms of His mercy, to cast the wicked into the pit of eternal despair and death. What an idea of the judgment to come must those angels have had, when they bade the disciples turn their thoughts from their ascending Lord, to the time when He should come again! A thousand or ten thousand years are to them but as one day. While, therefore, our Lord sits at God's right hand exalted there above the universe, He sits also there as an expectant Judge; waiting for the Grand Assize being prepared for Him. He looks down upon men as preparing for themselves His verdict. In anticipation He can pronounce upon each present deed or circle of deeds, the verdict that it now deserves. And we need not wait for the real judgment day, before our lives can be put in the light of our future Judge's countenance. If we say, Christ will come again at the end of the world to judge the quick and the dead, cannot we bring Him down now in imagination, and place Him near us, judging even now, all we say and do? What is that Christian consciousness that is in all our hearts, but the power of looking at ourselves in the light of Christ? It is what is in the power of every Christian to do,—to bring down Christ now from heaven, and make Him the righteous Judge of all we are from time to time saying or doing.

We may therefore be said to be standing this day and hour before the judgment-seat of Christ. His law is the sole standard of human goodness; to Him it is given to judge quick and dead; and no one can avoid His judgment-seat. The false glare disappears when the true light shines forth; and when the gentle Redeemer reveals Himself as the impartial Judge, every doubt disappears; and even in this life the faithful are put on His right; evil-doers go on their way comfortless, gloomy, and miserable.

The Intercessor and the Judge—both are necessary for us. We are eternally needing that He should make intercession for us; for, as long as we bear the bonds of this earthly life, so long do we find rest and consolation, only in the intercession of the Redeemer, and in our union with Him; but we must, to gain that, ever strive that He may be also for us the one who judges us; and that can only be the case, when we have given ourselves wholly up to Him, as those did of whom He said, "He that believeth on Me is not condemned."

My brethren, if we hold fast this standard, if we look upon that only as dear and precious and mighty, which is bound to the cross of Christ; if we allow ourselves to be wholly penetrated with His fulness; how much indeed are we then raised above the changes and chances of this mortal life, how full of

trust and reliance can we then commit the future to Him who so judges!

May we not therefore thank and praise our heavenly Father, who has been so rich in love as to have sent His Son Jesus Christ into the world, and again recalled Him up on high? We have, in this time between the day of His Birth and Ascension, had assiduously placed before us His holy and strength-giving example; it might have turned out a blessing to all of us. We might have became rooted and grounded in Him. If we feel weak and liable to fall into sin, let us never fail to strengthen ourselves with the thought that He is ascended up on high, and "ever liveth to make intercession for us." Are we doubtful how we should walk and please God, let us remember that Christ Jesus is our only judge, both in this world and at the last day; and we may well make it a matter of indifference whether we meet with praise or blame from men, provided only we know that we belong to Him, and are doing His will, and furthering the work that He has begun in us. He is the only Judge of our actions; but though the only Judge, He is the Judge,—the present Judge of all we are now saying and doing, the future Judge of all we shall have ever said or done, unrepented of and unforgiven.

To-day, while it is called to-day, the judgment may be reversed for the morrow; but, on the last day, at that great meeting, when will be assembled

the universe, there will be no coming morrow, no reversing of the sentence then to be passed; but our Lord Jesus will then sit enthroned, the final Judge of all things, and will assign us all our portion. My brethren, may we so live to-day, that that portion may not be the portion of the wicked, the cursed,—the place of the wicked—the place "reserved for the devil and his angels"—a being cut off from light, and joy, and peace—a being consigned to everlasting darkness, despair, and misery.

Whitsunday.[1]

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place."—Acts ii. 1.

We probably have here an account of the first public general assembly which Christians ever held. Doubtless often before this, the Apostles and first Disciples had met together in little knots or companies, privately, for mutual comfort and edification, thinking of their departed Master and pondering over what He had said unto them; but there had been, as far as can be gathered, no common general assembly of all, until this day, which might be called, our first Whitsunday.

We may picture this meeting as consisting at first of those of whom mention is made in the first chapter of the Acts, and subsequently of a mixed multitude from outside, who knew not what to make of what was going on before their eyes; and, in amazement, first inquired what it all meant, and then in mockery suggested that these people must all be full of new wine.

We will, therefore, look upon this wonderful

[1] Partly translated, partly adapted, from Schleiermacher.

meeting as the first common gathering together of Christians—as the original of that assembling of ourselves together, which has been continued from that day up to the present, for prayer, for hearing and expounding doctrine, and for breaking bread. But, if that first meeting was the original of all succeeding ones, why are these public services of ours, which are its lineal descendants, no longer like the original pattern? The Holy Spirit passed up and down the building on that first assembly day, like a mighty rushing wind; and tongues, as if of flame, sat on the heads of those composing that first congregation; have things with us so lost their power, that, in our public assemblies, though they are the lineal descendants of that glorious day, we can point no more to such manifestations, as that first one was, of God's Holy Spirit? If, as we read the account, we find great stress laid on God's promise that He would pour out of His Spirit upon *all* flesh, are we not included under that promise,—we, who have been called by the name of Christ, even from our birth? When the Apostle says, "To you and to your children, and to all that are far off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call," is this promise made; are we not to consider ourselves as the persons meant, and may we not appropriate to ourselves that favour, which was thus promised to every one?

There is no doubt that we are included in the

promise; and, if we only incline our hearts to receive God's Holy Spirit, it will dwell as richly in these our assemblies at the present day, as it did at that first gathering together; for every essential detail of that history may be said to be represented, even now in the midst of us. If the form and circumstance then remain the same, why should the spirit alone be wanting?

What are these details? We are very much struck, as we read the account, at the idea of the Holy Spirit filling the building, where the people were assembled, and all hearing the word preached in their own tongue, wherein they were born. But has not even that its counterpart among us in our own day? Do we think nothing of the number of races and tribes who, in our own day, are hearing, every Lord's day, the self-same word read and preached to them, and that too in the tongues, strange as they may be to the original language of the Gospel, wherein they all were born? We forget, too, perhaps, from how many pulpits in our own land Christ is preached every Sunday—and how varied the styles, though the message is the same! Let any of us hold any views we please of the doctrines of Christianity,—put any interpretation we like to cardinal portions of Holy Writ; and it would not be impossible to find the Gospel and the Word of God preached and interpreted, in this our land and day, according to the views and opinions, wherein we have been brought up and born.

Do we think that the Holy Spirit was present at that first assembly in a manner, unparalleled among us of the present day? There is no doubt that He was there in a most wonderful manner, but it is also most certain that He breathes upon us in the congregation so strikingly, that, upon consideration, we might be filled with amazement for ourselves. Words read and preached in the congregation, from the heart, have a thousand times the force, that they would have, if merely spoken between man and man, in private; and is there not a mighty manifestation of the Spirit there? Levity, thoughtlessness, inattention, have a tendency to break and annul that spiritual influence, which is everywhere present among people worshipping together in Christ's name, and in earnest; but that it is there, ready to operate, is proved by the fact that, if we are sitting or kneeling by the side of some one, even though he be a perfect stranger to us, and we hear his heartfelt devotion breathed out in his prayers, even in a whisper, the feeling communicates itself to us, and we in turn act upon others, till the whole assembly feels the influence.

Let me ask, what would be the result, if we all, with one accord, came together in this house of God, and by God's grace bent down our hearts, determined in all humility, devotion, and fervency, to let God's Holy Spirit have free access to our spirits? We should, there is no doubt, feel God's Holy Spirit pass

like electric fluid from one person to another; and, if there were no levity, no thoughtlessness, no worldliness present to break the chain, and nullify the effect, it would be as apparent that God's Holy Spirit was passing up and down this building among us, as if we heard the rushing mighty wind, that was present at the first public meeting of the early Christians, and saw tongues of fire sitting on each of our heads: and we should be each of us feeling the spirit of devotion in our own way—in the way agreeable to the temper and spirit, with which we were born.

There would be the devotion of the gentle and good woman, receptive, submissive, obedient, anxious to listen and receive, willing to hand on and communicate, differing in its way from that of the man, active, energetic, impatient of delay, more anxious to act upon the commission given, than to listen to its details. Different again, too, would be the devotion of the innocent trusting child, hardly aware of a Fall in man, and calling God his Father without reserve and hesitation: different too would be the devotion of the old man, satiated with the fulness of his experiences, and looking forward to what that change will bring him, which must come after not many years:—different, too, the devotion of those, who, though poor in this world's goods, can yet thank God that there is a nobility and endowment of soul,

which can make amends for lack of this world's riches and honour: and different too would be the devotion of those among us, who have learned by patience and the training of God's grace, to feel that all in this world is indeed weak, that is not upheld by the strength that cometh down from above.

Varied, therefore, as might be the ways in which we should each feel our devotion exercised, we should yet know that it was the one and the self-same Spirit of God, passing across our hearts, and affecting them severally after their own nature. And, inasmuch as that would be so, as indeed it has been the case over and over again, in modern times and among ourselves too, we may infer that the reason that it is not always so lies in our own lukewarmness of heart, and our indifference to the presence of that Holy Spirit. The Spirit is there, but we are worldly, unfit to receive it.

A preparation of heart was a pre-requisite, even in that first meeting: those present came to it with hearts attuned and made ready; they were full of expectation, and were not disappointed. It was in obedience to their Master's commands that those Apostles and Disciples were with one accord in one place; it was in expectation of *His* promise that they sat there; their thoughts were towards *Him;* their hearts were full of *Him;* and, when St. Peter began to explain to the new comers the nature of the wonderful things they were witnessing, the text and

substance of his discourse was Christ. How truly, in thinking of the astonishing effects of St. Peter's discourse, might we see in them a verification of Christ's own words about the operation of the Spirit: "He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you; and He shall lead you into all truth; for He shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you!" And if we want the same Holy Spirit to have free course, in our assemblies brought together for public worship at the present day, it must be looked for through Christ alone; and, if these meetings are to some extent lifeless, may it not be that we have not looked for the coming of Christ in them, and have not assembled therein in express obedience to His commands?

No one will deny that the high tone of our Christian assemblies is in all cases a little relaxed, in favour and in consideration of those who may be present, not being wholly Christ's. Their influence weakens the power of our expectations. Phrases are levelled down, lest they should seem exaggerated. The wings of our devotion are clipped, lest we should soar above what might be called the region of soberness. A little sacrifice of appearance is put up with, lest the vastness of the reality should alarm. Time that might be occupied solely in thinking of our Saviour, or in giving vent to our enthusiasm for Him, is now partly consumed in establishing His claims, explaining the

[illegible] in His mission and suffering shows about His divinity.

The Holy Spirit is order to show His disappointment of man's uselessness and to bring about a better state of things, raise His fallen man under such conditions. The normal state of many among us is for the person weak and sickly and many sleep. Our services lag and are cheating.

But there are a thousand ways in which in modern times a longsuffering of Christ's enemies men's power. It is not that the power of Christ's Spirit is weakened; it is we who are weakened in ourselves. If we see anything lovely in this earth and our souls ask "Whose is the image?" we shall find that it is but His image that gives it all its beauty. Is anything in this world striking and glorious such as men thoroughly and unanimously approve of admire and welcome? What is the superscription? If we examine it, we find that it is Christ's name that it bears, and none other's. The Holy Spirit makes our hearts also bear witness to the power of Christ, by blessing such tendencies as have reference to Christ, and leaving all others barren and inoperative. Worldliness is emptiness, vanity, vexation of spirit; Christianity is light, life, joy, peace, and contentment. As once the power of sin brought our Saviour Himself to the cross, so does sin kill and destroy us; while every Christian grace and virtue that springs forth in our hearts is

only a proof that Christ has been raised from the dead, and now ever liveth to invigorate and help us.

The Holy Spirit, therefore, in convicting the world of sin, is only turning it to Christ. It shows the channels through which it can act, at the present day, with all that vigour and power it did at that general meeting of the Christians, which first took place after their Lord's ascension.

My brethren, that first general meeting was fraught with most wonderful results. The Holy Spirit went forth, and worked so effectually among outsiders present, that a cry arose among them, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" It cannot be denied that often and often in our Christian public gatherings, when things have been going well with us, and the Holy Spirit has been passing up and down among us, individuals among ourselves have felt a yearning—a longing after peace and happiness; and the cry has risen to some of our lips, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

That Spirit, therefore, which brought three thousand to the Lord on that first day is ready now also, if it only had the same free course among ourselves.

To us and to our children does that promise undoubtedly belong, which St. Peter offered from the Lord to the people of his day. Let us then become rightly aware of the power, that lies in our public services. No one can deny that there is something

in a large body of men and women assembled together in Christ's name for the public worship of Almighty God, that there is not in acts of devotion performed at home, in our closets or at our bedsides. The lesson of to-day is that it is the Holy Spirit testifying to the power of Christ. Its power on that day was irresistible; it flew from heart to heart, and overpowered every obstacle; something seems to limit it among us; probably worldliness does, or levity, or thoughtlessness,—some want of earnestness. Its power would undoubtedly instantaneously increase, if we gave ourselves up to it with all humility, attention, and expectation: and in that case imagine our blessedness! The Spirit would dwell in us richly in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. And its fruits are "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, meekness, goodness, temperance;"—peace and purity within, joy and happiness without; the favour of God here, glory hereafter.

My brethren, all this is not impossible; the promise of God is to us and to our children. And the promises of God are yea and amen, certain, sure, and never failing.

Trinity Sunday.

"O, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!"—Rom. xi. 33.

The feeling that was predominant in the heart of the Apostle as he gave utterance to the words of our text, is no doubt the feeling that ought to sway ours also, as we are called upon by our Church to commemorate a mystery, which our intellects must at present be content to regard, as utterly beyond their power to comprehend.

A thing is none the less true, because it is incomprehensible. An object in the far distance is none the less real and perfect in all its details, because to our shortness of sight it appears indistinct and undefined. A patch of bluebells on a hill-slope is not the less a patch of bluebells, though from a distance you are only conscious of their colour, and fail to distinguish the individual flowers.[1]

It is probable that there never was an age in the history of the world, when there were so many men

[1] Tyndall.

so averse to pondering upon the Unintelligible, and so impatient of consuming time upon what promises to be void of all practical result, as the present.

A religious doctrine is, in such quarters, tolerated only when it can be shown that it has an influence upon morals; and dogmatism, though it may be pardoned in the Bible, is violently resented not only in individuals, but even in a church.

From which it comes to pass, that a creed, though it may be only repeating what the Bible says, "He that believeth not shall be damned," is listened to with reluctance and impatience; and especially so, when its enunciations seem to be upon points of doctrine that are not only incomprehensible, but apparently also devoid of all connection with conduct and morals.

But, if a doctrine can give us a more real and perfect idea of the Deity, if it can bring the Deity closer to man, showing it forth in the light of an ensample to humanity, or proving that it is the author in men's hearts of all that is best there, then the doctrine is no more a dead letter, even as far as conduct and morals are concerned.

From more than one point of view, then, may we be justified, if, on Trinity Sunday, the day which our Church especially sets apart for the recognition of the doctrine of a Trinity in Unity, and an Unity in Trinity, we refer in the day's sermon to this funda-

mental and essential article of our belief. At the same time, there is no doubt that our feeling in approaching it should be, "O, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!"

While, therefore, we are fully alive to the fact that God is so far above us, that no straining of our intellects, no searching can find Him out; we at the same time hope, that a consideration of even so much as we can understand, and a pondering upon that only which is revealed and explained, will not lead us into the sin of presumption, but rather arouse in us a more heartfelt reverence and adoration, and draw more largely from the sources of human love and sympathy.

The Deity is one — and yet three. The three are one, by some closer tie than what we call union; they may almost be described as identical—identical certainly in feeling, wish, and action; but yet distinct as three;—not one, as light, radiance, and warmth, mind, thought, and consciousness,—nor yet distinct, as three persons, Peter, James, and John. How one can be three — divided; how three can be one— united, passes the power of man to divine. Still we say Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and yet there are not three Gods, but one God. At the same time, the Father is not the Son, neither is the Son the Father,

and neither of them is the Holy Ghost. Though three, they are one; so that, if a man is loved and aided by one, he is loved and aided by all.

Now the most elaborate attempt of man to set forth this is the Athanasian Creed—no explanation of the nature of the Deity made in the pride of human intellect, but a bulwark or breakwater laid down necessarily with hard and fast lines, to resist encroaching error. It consists of qualified assertions. It always found human words either too much or too little; no sooner did it lay down a proposition than a phrase "and yet not" had to be brought in to qualify it. If we remember that error gave birth to the Athanasian Creed, its hard and decided dogmatism may easily be pardoned it. Indeed, if we were familiar with the history of the early Church, we should find that it was rendered necessary by the speculations of subtle thinkers, embarrassed by a wish to explain in human language the mystery of the Incarnation. These men were sure to run wild; and it necessarily followed that their erroneous views had to be combated. We have only to represent to ourselves a second Being, our blessed Saviour, God and man, one with God the Father, and yet distinct from Him; and a Holy Spirit, acting, as proceeding from both the Father and the Son, and yet at the same time distinct from them both; and to consider that they form a subject which would *necessarily*, and to the entire exclusion of all other

subjects, occupy the minds of some of the most powerful intellects that the world has ever known,—to see that speculations about the nature of our Lord and the Holy Spirit would abound, and erroneous views be inevitably entertained.

When people read of our Lord's doings in the Gospels, a necessity would soon spring up of reminding them that Jesus of Nazareth was perfect God, equal to, and of the same substance with, the Father; then, with the same breath, people would have to be bidden not to forget that He was perfect man: the next step would be to assert that He was both God and man; and now, feeling that we had got into what was beyond man's intellect to demonstrate or even conceive, we have to make assertions in a somewhat negative manner, hedging round what we had already said, and explaining that, though He was God and man, neither must the manhood be lost in the Godhead, nor the Godhead be lowered by being mixed with the manhood; and, as that would suggest to us the existence of two distinct beings, we should have to say that they were not two but one, and that one Being we call Christ; and after all there must not be any confusion of substance, but the oneness must be by unity of person. In the same way it can easily be seen that similar questionings and disputes would arise about the nature and offices of the Holy Ghost—whether He were a distinct person from the Father

and the Son, whether He proceeded from the Son as well as from the Father, whether He were not among created beings.

We may, in our simplicity of thought and plainness of speech, feel wearied at the apparent inutility of such investigations; but such points were sure to suggest themselves, especially to minds so subtle as those of the Greeks; and, indeed, innumerable disputes did arise on these very points, and one so violent on the question whether the Holy Ghost proceeded from the Son as well as from the Father, that it divided Christendom. In the Athanasian Creed we find verses imbedded, which tell of these disputes, being directed against what was decided to be error; and a warning against error may help to show us in what direction truth is lying. Of course we do not hope to fathom such mysteries; we know that the nature of the Deity cannot be made intelligible to man's finite comprehension; yet, while it is Trinity Sunday, we may well be excused, if we allow our thoughts to ponder upon that mystery of a Trinity in Unity and Unity in Trinity, a little longer than usual, not to explore it, not to satisfy ourselves of the futility of approaching mysteries; but to bring parts of it nearer into view, that our reverence and adoration may be increased, and our love and sympathy deepened.

Trinity in Unity, and Unity in Trinity! Yes; we want no plurality of gods; our worship should be

one. In the old days of Polytheism a man did not escape intact by propitiating the favour of *one* god;—any deity who could consider that he had been overlooked was supposed to feel jealous, and visit the neglect on the witless man's offending head. With us there is but one God, whether we look to the threats of the Old Testament, or to the love of the New. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one — one in anger, one in justice, one in mercy, one in love and anxiety for man's salvation. God the Son did not appease the wrath of God the Father, as of some ruthless, strange, alien God, unwilling to be reconciled. God the Father so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believed in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. And God the Son is represented as being the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of His person, the Man whom the Lord of Hosts calls His Fellow, or Companion.

But neither, on the other hand, do we want to be worshippers of a Unity only—of some Being dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto—of some Being—the High and Holy One that inhabiteth eternity; for though to Him belong our life and the life of everything we see around us, and to Him returns our life when we cease to breathe, and His will it is which is expressed in the laws we see in operation around us; yet we want God to be something nearer

to us than some vague spirit—we know not what. What we want to feel is that the great Being upon whom we are dependent is in some sense like ourselves,—that the best feelings we have are His,—that He can look at things from our point of view, having been tempted in all points like as we are; and therefore can feel compassion for our weaknesses; and, in consequence of all that, will be indulgent to us and soften the crushing weight of those irresistible unpitying laws, if at any time we have drawn them down upon our heads.

And then, when we fall into sin and yet feel that we are responsible beings, whom our Creator may justly bring to account, and punish for not having fulfilled His just expectations;—in view of the approach of that great day of account, when all, both small and great, must stand before God, how we should shudder at the idea of then being judged by one who was not able to enter into our difficulties! how we should rejoice at thinking that He, who was now our Advocate, was to be our Judge—that He was not only bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, but equal in dignity, worth, and nature to the Lord of Hosts, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the King of heaven Himself!

And in any picturing of the next world, we are very considerably affected by what doctrine we hold of the Trinity,—of the Incarnation of the Son of God,

—of the redemption of the world by Him. We are not spirits; we are human beings, but with aspirations above our present state. We want the next world to be neither a world of spirits, nor yet a continuation of this, in all its misery and ruin. We want it like this, but better. We rejoice to hear of the doctrine of the Fall of man, and of a promised restoration. We are glad to hear that sin has ruined this world, for we can imagine how beautiful it will be, when rescued from sin. And, when we know that it has been redeemed by one Almighty, very and eternal God,—by that Being who made the world and us, in all our primeval beauty, brightness, and sinlessness; we think that the new heavens and the new earth will be again unimpeachable, and that we ourselves shall be again cleansed from all stain, and restored to the image and likeness of our Maker. And, as the Redeemer is Jesus of Nazareth, who wept at the grief of two lowly sisters of Bethany, by death bereft of their brother, so we may be sure that in that new world the first law will be that in it there be no misery, no sorrow, nothing pained and nothing dying.

But while we are in this world, we are dragged down by it. We may feel after something high and noble, as if we had some faint remembrances of the state in which we were first created; but the lower part of our nature hurries us on and confuses us. We are not able to reach after what we *can* put before

our hearts, much less *do* the things that we would. What are we to attempt? We will set to work, and cut out all that is unholy,—root and branch. We will retire from the world, out of reach of outside temptation; we will fast and mortify, do penance, use the curb and lash, that at last our human nature shall give in, tamed, subdued, obedient. But human nature subdued is worthless. Such a method is but a poor, weak, vain one. Man's best attempts, unaided, end in failure and confusion. But we are not left unaided. One Person of the Blessed Trinity is on earth, a Convincer, a Teacher, a Comforter. He is called the Spirit of God, the Spirit of the Father, the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus; again, He is the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of the Son, the Spirit of Jesus Christ. He has a personality; for He makes intercession, testifies, teaches, hears, and speaks. He is not identical with the Father, for the Spirit is said to intercede with the Father for the saints. God the Father and God the Son sent Him down from heaven —their Spirit, proceeding from them both—to be an indweller in men's hearts, convicting the world of sin, illumining the consciences of those who are brought into covenant with God the Father through the Son, giving them good desires, renewing them day by day, and imparting unto them His special gifts; and they are "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

Such are some very obvious and simple reflections, that arise naturally from a consideration of the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity and Unity in Trinity.

Philosophers may have regarded this doctrine as a profound metaphysical problem, wedded to what seemed consequences of the Incarnation, and may have refused to look at it; but nobody who has looked at it, has failed to acknowledge that the ideas of God contained in it are exactly what suit the condition of the humble repentant sinner, conscious of his own unworthiness, and anxious to be reconciled to his Almighty Father.

Let us come before the throne of grace in that spirit, and we too shall rejoice to think that there is an Almighty Father who loves us;—that there is a Being not inferior to, not otherwise minded than God the Father, Who is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and Who, inasmuch as He has lived through this world as one of ourselves, is able to sympathise to the uttermost with us in all our troubles;—and that there is an Almighty Spirit or agency,—proceeding, and yet in some sense distinct, from both Father and Son,—at work in the world, in our hearts, loving, helping, and sympathising with us as entirely, as God the Father and God the Son have done. These three Persons are all one; but how one and how three we do not know; we are content to wait for that knowledge until that happier moment shall arrive, when,

the vail being drawn aside, we, who now see, as through a glass darkly, shall see God face to face, and know Him, as only then He can be known.

In the meantime we go through this world, in faith, in hope, in comfort; and instead of worrying ourselves with guesses, which cannot profit, we are content to exclaim with the Apostle, "O, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!"

Parents, Children, Confirmation.

"For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him; and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment."—GEN. xviii. 19.

IT is only when we reflect upon it, that we become fully alive to the very great power for good and for evil, parents possess over their children during the space of many years. Indeed, it often happens that the extent of this power and influence is only being understood by the parents themselves, when the time of that power and influence is fast passing away.

However little influence a man may have with his neighbours, with his children his authority is or might be unbounded; whether he be in a high or low condition of life compared with that of his fellow-men, in his own house, and among his own children, he is equal to the greatest. And it is in this position, as the head of a household, that the patriarch Abraham may be looked upon, as an example for men in all ages of the world, and in every condition of life.

In many respects, he was most unlike what any of us can, by the greatest stretch of imagination, be

compared to. He was an Arab prince, surrounded by slaves and dependants. He was actually the king, priest, and father of his people. His household a complete little sovereignty, where his word was law. But from the words of our text he might be the father of a family, or the master of a household and no more; his outward surroundings, the solitariness in which he dwelt, his dignity, his wealth, the number of his dependants, his power, have all disappeared from the narrative; in being the father of a family, the master of a household, he might be one of ourselves. And God said of him that He knew him, that he would command his children and his household after him; and they should keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment. What a testimony is that to Abraham's own piety! In fact we may say that God's knowledge of what Abraham would do with reference to his children, was derived from what He knew he did with regard to himself. The good qualities a man possesses and appreciates in himself, the same he likes to see possessed by his children.

Such a method of inferring is perfectly fair and natural. The parent is the source and origin of things. Everything good that it is wished children should possess should be possessed first by the parent. A man's virtue, for instance, or self-restraint, should overflow from him on to his children; if a man assumes that virtue from his children, putting it on for

their sakes, merely to serve as an example to them; shining with but a borrowed light, it fails to attract attention and regard, and may as well be put under a bushel. God knew that Abraham was full of piety, devotion, a sense of judgment and justice, and knew, too, that he would not rest, unless he saw his children practising them likewise.

And, if there are certain qualities that it is for man's advantage to be possessed of—advantage, I say, both in the broadest and narrowest sense of the term, —from whom shall children expect to see themselves derive such advantages, if not from their parents?

There is no one who would not maintain that it is not bread only, that children have a right to demand from their parents. We have all been children, and we all feel that we all had a right to be more than dragged up. Children may justly expect not only to be fed and clothed from day to day, but to be put also in a way, some time or other, when they grow up, of getting their *own* bread. They have a right to demand that they shall be taught, inasmuch as the slightest slip in this world is sometimes enough to plunge a man into lifelong difficulties, how a man may best expect to go through life with the smallest amount of log hanging about his neck; and, inasmuch as we are all immortal beings, how he may best save his soul for eternity. Children have no idea of the difficulties about to meet them in the world.

Lessons too, in advance, fall in all cases to the ground unproductive. Principles have to be instilled by daily use; and habits are things that have grown. For a long time, as the child is developing into the man, the parent has to order—command with the authority of a despot; the child has to obey with the unquestioning humility of a slave. It would be useless, reasoning, with a child, of circumstances, of which he can have no experience, and therefore no idea. We grown-up people know how difficult it is to gain our daily bread, unless we have a position in life, and a character wherewith to keep that position; we are perfectly aware of the misery caused in after life by a fretful, ungovernable, or imperious temper—of the drawbacks that inevitably will attend a man, whose education has been from any cause neglected. We have seen a thousand instances of the danger a man has to run in life, who has no fixed principles to guide him. We probably need not be told what a void that man feels in his heart, who has no religion to soothe and settle him, who in trouble and perplexity is on a pathless ocean, without chart and compass, and who, as life goes on, is harassed by doubts of the meaning of life, and by apprehensions of its issues. Is it possible for us, even if we wished it ever so much, to impress all that upon a child, by description and reasoning?

No. When we are children, our parents have to take us in hand and command us; they do not stay

and give us reasons for their commands; we should not understand them, if they did. But, in after life, how thankful we all are that we have had pious, courageous, and thoughtful parents—rich, too, not so much in worldly goods as in worldly prudence and spiritual insight, and who have both forecast for us the future, and ordered us accordingly!

How wide then is the extent of what children may in justice demand from their parents! It is not only daily bread, clothing, shelter; it is not only instruction and a means of livelihood, but there is moral and religious teaching also,—all that can come from an honest, peaceful, pious home and good examples. Children have a right to be taught, to be guided, directed, nay, even commanded, that in the end they may do judgment and justice, living the life of the righteous, and also dying their death.

The extent of these demands seems to grow, as we look and ponder on them. We are Christians; our children have a right to be made partakers of our privileges. Have we been baptized and admitted into the Christian Covenant, then our children have a right to be brought into God's house, that they also may be baptized, that so God may take them into His Covenant, and give them His assisting and saving grace. They have a right to expect that it shall be promised for them in their name, that they shall renounce the Devil and his guiding; that they shall

be led to believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith, and be taught to obey God's Commandments.

What shall we say about Confirmation? Have not children a right that the opportunities which that rite gives for making a good start in life, be also put within their power? I know of no sight more striking and impressive than that of a number of young people assembled for Confirmation. Nobody would realise, unless after experience, how deeply young people are affected by it. Bystanders in a large and busy town sometimes, taking a hasty glance, smile and ridicule; but those of us, who have children about to partake of that rite, are almost equally affected with the young people themselves. Indeed, if we are merely thoughtful people, no more than somewhat disappointed and dispirited at the world, we think how these young persons are beginning a page, which we have soiled and blotted. And what would many a man, now hardened in feeling and worn out with satiety, give, if he could now from this time, begin anew his life, setting forth with zest in his enjoyment and purity in his heart? How many of us would only be too glad to be converted and born again, to be able to say and feel that all old things are passed away; we are now about to go forward with all things new.

Parents who do not give their children the chance of this fresh start in life, when such a start is pos-

sible, deprive them of a good deal. Such young people are just at the age when they may feel, as they never can again; and certainly thoughts may then be raised up in their minds, such as may affect a lifetime. On even low worldly grounds a rite that gives a young man or woman strength to set off again in life, as if from a new starting-point, with all old weaknesses forgotten and mistakes blotted out, must ever possess much that will recommend it to all thinking persons; but, if there is a blessing attached to it, like grace to a sacrament when received in a proper spirit, how much do we not lose in not having had the opportunity of partaking of it, at the age when it is especially capable of being received and made use of!

Many an outsider, who took but a gloomy view of human nature, looking at a number of young people assembled for Confirmation, might speculate upon the transitoriness of these religious feelings, and doubt whether there would be many among them, who in a month's time would be thinking, as they then did. Some of the bystanders might be inclined to predict that, as a large number of these young people belonged to irreligious parents, their Confirmation-feelings might be laughed at and ridiculed, before even that day was out. But if, unfortunately, good feelings are transitory, it is only an argument why they should be recurred to, and freshened up at every

opportunity. The burden of the ridicule ought to have been caught up and arrested by the parents. Abraham not only commanded his children to do judgment and justice, but undoubtedly protected them also in any fulfilling of his commands. But it often happens among ourselves that a young person is left to stand or fall, to set ridicule at defiance, or sink beneath it as he may, unnoticed by those who ought to have watched and guarded him as the apple of their eye. Nothing ought to fill a thinking person more with love and compassion than seeing a young person walking up to and kneeling at the Lord's Table, the first Sunday after Confirmation, alone, unsupported, uncountenanced by those who ought to be the authors of his faith, as they are of his being.

We may most regretfully have to acknowledge that a great majority of those, who are at any time confirmed, will some time or another fall away from their high hopes and good resolutions; but those will certainly have the best chance of, by God's grace, living up to them, who have a good home, and are not only supported, but commanded also, by thoughtful, godly, and pious parents.

Indeed, if we reflect, we may not be unwilling to acknowledge that Confirmation is to religion what a settling in a trade, business, or profession is to the world. A young person, launched into the world, has a position of his own to observe, keep, and main-

tain; he may certainly be in the future assisted with further counsel, sympathy, or material help, but the career has been given him.

And, if it should be thought that we are insisting too much on the letter of Confirmation, we must remember that it is a rite of our Church, handed down from the earliest ages of Christianity, and moreover it is what we witness partaken of at this season. But we are well aware that the letter is worthless without the spirit. What we mean, therefore, is, that we think that all young people should be as carefully established and confirmed in a spiritual career, as they are in a worldly one; and, even if there is thought to be great danger of bankruptcy or failure happening to a spiritual career, the present establishing should not be neglected for fear of future evil.

What we hold to is—that a parent must be to his family what the Patriarchs of old were to theirs, Father, King, and Priest; the Father to nurture, the King to marshal, order, and appoint to each their task, the Priest to answer for all to God. If people ask us to compare the relative importance of the three offices, we may at least reply that the three offices go to make up the complete parent; and in the bodily frame we cannot say which joint is the most important.

We all acknowledge how numerous are the deaths

of those, who die as infants or young children. Some people exclaim that the Father or Mother has here failed in his duty, as Nourisher or Feeder. We know, too, how many young people, when grown up to maturity, fail in their worldly careers, and have ruin, if not infamy, written as epitaphs over them. Men ask, Has not the Parent here failed in his duty as King? Ought he not to have arranged and marshalled, appointed and ordered, better than to have allowed such disorder to have arisen where he was Sovereign paramount? People certainly make the worldly ruin of children reflect back on to their parents.

But what of their Christian career? It is perhaps a little more hidden and in secret. The Parent, however, was the Priest of his family quite as much as he was the Father, or King. This, then, is what we should be reminded of.

But before a man can be a true Priest of his family, he must himself be a worshipper of God. It is but a secondhand way of doing things to assume a virtue when we have it not, but need it. We are by nature not only Fathers and Kings in our families, but Priests also; and the Christian career of our children, their eternity, depends in no slight measure upon us. We are bound to be religious Christian men.

People in the world judge of the honesty and

virtue of children from their parents. They hesitate not to judge in the same way of their bodily health and strength, soundness of limb and constitution. Is it any wonder, then, that there should be a somewhat similar analogy in things spiritual? The text seems to suggest one. The Almighty appears to us, as we read it, to take it for granted that Abraham's children will be like their Father. He knows Abraham as a man of spiritual devotion, of judgment, and justice; He knows that Abraham will command his children, and He expects that the result will be that they will turn out to be men who will let none of His words fall to the ground—men who will execute judgment and justice, and be worthy of all the blessings He is intending to bring on them. If *we* are such men, it is not unlikely that *our* children also will be blessed in like manner, as were the children of faithful Abraham.

All Saints.

"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."—REVELATION vii. 9, 10.

WHEN our Lord was on earth a man once asked Him, Lord, are there few that be saved? He seemed to pass the question by, by advising all to do their utmost to be themselves of the number; inasmuch as many who might seek to enter in at the strait gate, might not, alas! be able.

It is to be hoped that, if we ponder upon the number of the saved, we do so not from curiosity, but from sympathy.

What has been done by man, by man can be done again, both in the world's work and also in grace; and the more that have succeeded, or the more that have been helped and blessed, the stronger might be our own hopes that what others have been happy in, we shall not be allowed to fail in and be miserable. We delight to pray that their good examples may

strengthen us. They are the heroes of our Faith. We thank God for them. We call them departed Saints. We consecrate a day to their memory. We dedicate churches in their honour. We delight to go to the Book of Revelation and picture them as a great multitude, which no man could number. We open our hearts and enlarge our sympathies, and say, They are of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues. We try and picture of what character they have been; and we remember that our Lord was once asked who the greatest in the kingdom of heaven was, and He took a little child, and set him in the midst, and said, Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

If He had pointed at some Chief Priest, Scribe, or Pharisee, some Emperor, Potentate, Tetrarch, Judge, or Ruler, we might have sunk down disheartened, thinking that outside circumstances gave such men much vantage ground whereon to stand; but when it was a little child who was the greatest, we know that the greatness lies in our own hearts, not in worldly pomp and circumstance. To beat down, reduce, and lower our dignity and station, may be as difficult for the inclination as to raise, exalt, and elevate; but we need no material help of circumstance in the one case, while in the other, without outward aid or opportunity, the greatest

striving is useless. A king's grandeur can be put on or imitated by the favourites of Fortune only; a child's simplicity can be cultivated by poor and rich alike.

But we have only to search the Scriptures with the express purpose of finding out of what kind the persons are whom God delighteth to honour, to discover that what God values lies within the power of a man's heart alone. Blessed are the poor in spirit; blessed are they that mourn; blessed are the meek; blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; blessed are the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers—they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake. The widow's mite, offered in the true spirit of self-denial, is a richer gift than thousands of gold and silver given out of pride, ostentation, and abundance. A cup of cold water, given in love and for the sake of Christ, shall not lose its reward, while rivers of oil may flow by unnoticed.

There shall not only, therefore, be a great multitude at the last day of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, but they shall be, as the thousands in Israel, poor, insignificant, of whom the world has known nothing. Indeed, in the vision from which our text is taken, when St. John saw this great multitude who were clothed with white robes, and had palms in their hands, an elder asked him whether he

would like to know what they were, and whence they came; and explained that they were those who had come out of great tribulation. They had been tried but had conquered; and now they hunger no more, neither thirst any more; and God is about to wipe away all tears from their eyes.

We shall now have to add to the list of such as are like children—to the poor in spirit, to the mourners, the meek, the merciful, the peacemakers, the persecuted, to poor widows who have given their last mite, to the destitute who have nothing but a cup of cold water to give—we have to add to them others who have been tried in the furnace of affliction, and have come out purified and victorious. Yes, what makes up the character of God's heroes is tribulation well and manfully endured; the world's comfort, peace, joys, and honours despised; the thorny path chosen in preference to that strewn with flowers; unobtrusiveness, gentleness, meekness, patience, and resignation, shown in love for Christ and in humble imitation of His great condescension; fighting the good fight though there is no one there to applaud; doing good without letting the left hand know what the right hand doeth; subduing one's own love of self-indulgence and pride in secret conflict, unknown to all but to the great Father of spirits.

In, therefore, that great multitude which shall be

assembled at the last day, there will be not only Apostles, Prophets, Martyrs—not only all those who have been the great pillars of the Church in past ages; not only men who in our own time have found themselves in the front rank, bearing the brunt of Christ's battle against His adversaries, but men and women also who have, at any time and in any place, however unknown their names, and retired their position, believed in God, and given their testimony, quiet though it was, to the power of what is invisible.

We may be sure that in the scrutiny of the day of judgment, when surroundings shall be stripped away from men and things, the great men and women, and the noble deeds of the earth, will not be those that the world has blazoned forth on its records, but men and deeds as unpretending as the widow and her mite, or the sinner with her alabaster box of precious ointment. If we ask the world, even as it is in the Church, for its greatest men, we have pointed out to us some Pope or Potentate, some John the Baptist, or a Savonarola, a St. Paul or a John Wesley, a Luther or a Calvin, a Melancthon, an Erasmus; some Christian philanthropist well known to fame, like a John Howard or a Florence Nightingale; but if we ask those whom the world is willing to honour, whom they think the most worthy to be honoured by the world, if everything were known, and all had their due, we should hear of some un-

known friend of theirs, some mother, some sister, some one totally unknown to fame, but whose inspiration, sentiments, and suggestings set them in motion, and were the mainspring of all that they were given the power of realising in outward action.

Nay, without particularising, we may say great men, whether in the world or in the Church, never stand alone; below them, on all sides of them, buoying and supporting them, giving them that pre-eminence which distinguishes them, is the mass of the insignificant ones, who delight to see what they were wishing in vain themselves to realise, made visible and embodied in the actions of another. If, then, it is through the aspirations, desires, and support of the weak ones of the earth that the great ones obtain their greatness,—on a day of scrutiny, when omniscient discrimination shall separate things, and shall give to each and all their full, just, and proper due, we may be sure that, though the first may not be last, the last will not be wholly passed by forgotten.

How full, then, may that vast assembly, brought together on the last day,—an assembly so great that it cannot be numbered, so impartially collected that it contains men of all ages of the world, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues,—be of men and women like our own friends and relations, of men and women indeed like our own selves.

How much, too, may we bless God for thus giving

us a hope, not only for ourselves, but also for those near and dear to us, that we may meet in that assembly those friends and relations of ours who have departed this life in His faith and fear, leaving us for a time behind: they are already beginning to swell the ranks of that great multitude, which no one can number; waiting, as yet, until that great number be made up; waiting—but in faith, in full and perfect assurance.

But all this is not only in the distant future. The happy dead, and we who are still alive, are, provided we are Christ's, one even now, though we are for the time separated by a dark valley, which permits no looking across. We believe, and are reminded every Sunday at least, of our belief in a Communion of Saints. It is an article of our Christian Creed. This article means that there is some tie—some common union between good men on earth and the spirits of good men made perfect. Do we ask of what nature that union is? It may simply mean that we and they are partakers of a common hope, own a common Chief, look forward to being inhabitants of mansions in a common Father's home. All that is very true; but many people believe in an union closer than what even that implies. We and they are soldiers, fighting on behalf of the same cause, under the same banner: the battle that they waged is now in our hands; and shall not they be interested

in the way in which we are conducting ourselves—at the way in which we are carrying out what they laboured at—the commands and will of our common Commander? It is said that angels rejoice over one sinner that repenteth. Might it not also be said that they rejoice over one repentant sinner, who is following up his repentance by living unto God, and bringing forth fruits meet for it? And may not such a joy be shared in by saints also in heaven? At any rate, St. Paul says, "We are encompassed by a cloud of witnesses." That must mean an innumerable company; and possibly in that company are not only the angels of God in heaven, but blessed saints also, who are waiting until, by our labours, shall be brought about in God's good time that happy consummation of all things; and who, now resting from their labours, are capable of feeling joy and gladness when they see us, their successors, their friends and kinsmen, living unto God.

If that be even possible, what an argument and incentive it ought to be to us to shun the service of Satan, to run with patience the race that is set before us, to live in all earnestness the life they did.

The elder told St. John that that company, clothed in white, and with palms in their hands, were they which had come out of great tribulation. We might ask ourselves, And where is our tribulation? The only martyrs and confessors in this world

are not those who have actually laid down their lives or witnessed before ruthless kings and rulers a good confession. A life for Christ is often more difficult than a death for Him. To stop the mouths of lions, as the Epistle to the Hebrews has it, is often easier than to stop the mouths of our own savage lusts and passions, which are at all times threatening to devour us. We may, therefore, have in our measure and degree come out of great tribulation, if our life has been of the nature of a continual sacrifice of self—of a contest with indolence and sin, of a putting down of unholy lusts and tempers, of a bending down of our proud and rebellious wills, of a casting out of some hard and unforgiving spirit.

This company, therefore, of All Saints, may in all senses be composed not only of apostles, prophets, martyrs, confessors, pillars of the Christian faith—men whose blood has watered and whose teaching has given increase to the tree whose leaves are for the healing of the nations—men whose names have sounded wherever the gospel has been published; but of those also, whose names have been unknown to fame, hidden with Christ in God alone. Yes, unblazoned, as all these last have been in the written page of the Church's history, their deeds are down in God's book of remembrance, their names surely and indelibly recorded in the ever-living pages of the Lamb's book of life.

And we should also consider that, if there is to be this company assembled at the last day; and if, too, a communion exists even now at the present day between saints already made perfect and saints still labouring on earth, we must belong to the saints still labouring on earth, or we can never hope to be received into the number of saints made perfect in the other world. We cannot be severed from God here, not admitted into that communion on earth, and hereafter be joined to God, admitted into that assembly at the last day. This world and the other are in that respect one. Membership in heaven follows from having been admitted into membership on earth. If we crave for admission here, and God accepts us, and gives us the right of belonging, when here, to that brotherhood and union of saints extending from earth to heaven, we may have a reasonable hope that what has been begun on earth may be continued and perfected in heaven.

In that case we belong already to that innumerable company of All Saints to be gathered together at the last day. We picture it as being now, day by day, made up by those men and women, as they depart hence in God's faith and fear. The ranks are every day swelling—to be swelled still further by us, by our generation, by future generations. Those who are already in those ranks rest from their labours; we are still bearing the burden and heat of the day.

Both we and they are, however, one; and one day to be closely and visibly united in one; and, in hope of that union, we pray God that He will give us grace so to follow the good examples of all those who have departed this life in His faith and fear, that finally with them we may be made partakers of His heavenly kingdom.

We may hope for it; for they will form a great multitude, consisting of all who have lived and died in the faith of Christ, great and little, men and women, known and unknown, from all ages of the world, of all ranks and conditions, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues: they will be all clothed in white robes, and they will all have palms in their hands. They will have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb: they will have come forth out of much tribulation—conquerors; the tribulation being the troubles, trials, temptations, persecutions, and difficulties of this exacting, ensnaring, and seducing world.

THE END.